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WITH A BOER AMBULANCE IN NATAL.

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HAVING been present as surgeon with a Boer commando during the earlier stages of their campaign in Natal, a brief record of my own personal experiences and observations while with them may prove of some interest.

The outbreak of war found me in one of the Transvaal towns, where I had my practice and my home, with two alternatives before me: I could leave the country, and arrive in Delagoa Bay absolutely penniless, or I could stay under promise of remaining neutral, and thus possibly save something out of the wreck with which to begin the world again after a war which I estimated would last at its longest four months. I decided, rightly or wrongly, to remain.

Having once decided, I rapidly found it impossible to stay and be subjected to all the petty indignities and insults inevitable in a town, and a request (under the circumstances a command) from the head of the Transvaal Ambulance Service to accompany the Middelburg Commando Ambulance as surgeon found me only too willing to comply. Without anticipating matters, I may say that after the battle of Colenso, finding my position intolerable, I succeeded in leaving the Transvaal *via* Delagoa Bay, and made my way to the Cape, where I obtained employment under the Imperial Government, being appointed one of the medical officers in charge of the sick and wounded on board the hospital ship *Lismore Castle*.

At about the time that the burghers were called out in the end of September some vague outlines of an ambulance and medical department were to be traced in the official newspapers

of the republic. The medical officer of the 'Staats Artillerie,' a German—Dr. O. Hohls by name—was said to be the principal medical officer, and to have twenty-five surgeons with him, one being attached to each commando and a couple to his own staff, while some department or official was supposed to be exerting himself or itself in providing the necessary material. My own difficulties in providing proper equipment and necessaries for the ambulance under my charge would take too long to narrate.

The old bitter Boers, men and women, suggested that I was only going to the front to murder the sick and wounded, and that my proper place was in gaol. The grey-haired Landdrost, a capable, energetic man, could do nothing without instructions, which he was unable to get. One day, however, somebody woke up in the War Department and sent him a telegram, expressing surprise that a medical man had not accompanied the Commando. This the magistrate construed into a general power to act for the best, and he accordingly bestirred himself. A light spring wagon was promptly commandeered in the town, six good mules came from a British subject, a tall old stiff, broken-kneed horse was provided for my benefit, two leaky tents were dug out of the floor of the police barrack, a Hottentot was caught in the location and installed as mule driver, a stranded British subject volunteered to go as orderly, the wagon was filled with stores hastily gathered, and the whole outfit placed on the train; a huge case, weighing several hundred pounds, and containing medical requirements, which appeared at the last moment at the Landdrost's office, was dumped in alongside; and so at length the Middelburg Ambulance started for the front.

The deficiency in the matter of ambulances had gradually become felt throughout the country, and private endeavour was striving to remedy the remissness of the Government. Red Cross Societies had been formed in every town and village; Johannesburg contributed an ambulance under the auspices of the St. John's Ambulance; the large firms of T. W. Beckett and of Burke, of Pretoria, each contributed one well-equipped ambulance section. These we met embarking as we passed through Pretoria—three spacious spring wagons to each, splendidly 'muled,' the Red Cross gaily fluttering over the Transvaal colours, the men, smartly dressed in khaki, forming a brilliant contrast to our paltry turn-out. After wearisome delays we arrived during the night at Sandspruit siding, some few miles on the Transvaal side of Volksrust, the border station.

On either side of the railway the different camps lay scattered over the bare sandy plain. To the south, the tip of Majuba, every now and then veiled in mist, hinted grim memories of old ; another high peak near it, Pongwaan, commanding Laing's Nek and Charleston, was crowned by one of the baleful Transvaal big guns. The white tents of the Commandos guarding the border shimmered on the slopes of the distant hills ; the vierkleur belled proudly over the artillery camp, close outside which lay the headquarters of the veteran general.

The news of the ultimatum on October 9 brought a deep hush over the camp for a time, and sounded like a knell to the hearts of those who had still hoped that President Kruger was only at his old game of bluff, and would soon back down, although there were yet Boers fools enough to believe that England might send a peaceful reply to that document. The cup was full, however, and one could dimly imagine the stern preparation and exultation of the Indian veterans bivouacked among the hills of Natal, and whose dead comrades lay at Laing's Nek and Majuba ; the hurrying of men and horses ; the uproar at home. The two days of expectant waiting passed ; the period mentioned by the ultimatum expired at 5 P.M. on Wednesday, the 11th, but yet all was quiet and silent : the British made no sign across the border, the night passed undisturbed, and early next morning came the order to move forward some six miles to Volksrust. Evidently no attack was expected, and the Transvaal war cloud was about to burst. Wild rumours went flying about, but there was no reliable information obtainable.

It was a cold foggy morning as the long column of horsemen and wagons streamed along towards their rendezvous to wage war against the British Empire. The spectacle was an impressive one. Along three or four converging roads, as far as the eye could reach, stretched strings of white tented buck wagons and plodding oxen. Here and there light traps were being driven by burghers who preferred to travel more comfortably ; little knots of belated horsemen splashed joyously through the mud, glad to be free at last of the monotony of camp life. Above all a grey sodden sky ; the hills, and Majuba, veiled in mist and invisible ; the plain re-echoing with the cracking of whips and the shouting of drivers. At Volksrust, when we arrived, the final council of war was being held, and the plan of campaign settled upon. The fate of many thousands of human beings was being disposed of by these bearded farmers.

Leaving the village of Volksrust to the right, I found our camp pitched a little beyond it, on an undulating plain, surrounded by many similar camps, all agog with expectation. It had by now become very evident that the British intended acting on the defensive, as an invasion of Natal *via* Laing's Nek was already spoken of, and various detachments had been told off to force other passes. Mafeking was reported taken, and Cronje said to be marching on Vryburg, while Kimberley was being attacked by the Free Staters; beyond this there was no news of the outside world. Laing's Nek railway tunnel was reported intact and in the hands of the Boers, but this seemed incredible. Meantime our own fate had been decided. At three in the afternoon the Middelburg burghers were gathered, by dint of much shouting, round a wagon, on which stood the Commandant, Pete Trichard. Tall, stalwart and bronzed, six feet three inches in his boots, with crisp black hair and beard and dark eyes, a grandson of the Louis Trichard celebrated in the annals of the Voortrekkers, he stood facing us, a worthy representative of his race. Around him stood his field cornets: Jan Vercueil of the Town Guard, a grizzled trusted old warrior, who had run the Commandant very close in the voting for the Commandantship, personally a mild-mannered, quiet, moderate, and retiring man, but inspired with a deadly hatred for the English as a nation, having fought against them in the 1881 war; Marthinus Gouws, of Ward Olifants River, spare, small, and fair-bearded; Geel Joubert of 'Selons river' Ward, huge, strapping, dark-haired, of an easy, cheerful disposition; Jan Krige, of Ward Mapochsland, thick-set, weather-beaten, bronzed, and dark, with a merry twinkling eye and pleasant face, and an ostrich feather in his hard felt hat; Field Cornet Pretorius, of Ward Steenkwolspruit, florid, aged, and stout.

'Burghers,' spoke the Commandant, 'I have to tell you that there is no longer hope for peace. It is war, war! We have again to fight for the independence of our beloved land, which our forefathers bought with their blood. It will be a hard and bloody struggle, but we must not hesitate now; the time for talk has passed, and we must lay down our lives if they are wanted by our dear Transvaal. The great God who protected our fathers will also take care of us, a tiny people at war with a great Power. The English are in force near Dundee and are threatening us, and we have been ordered down to Doornberg to protect the border with General Lukas Meyer, and must start immediately. Only those with good fat horses may come now, and the others must

follow on with the wagons; they must take with them supplies for ten or fourteen days, for goodness knows when they'll see the wagons again.' He stopped, and a stolid silence succeeded, broken only by the deep breathing of his hearers. Then their pastor stood up, bareheaded and with closed eyes, and offered up a short fervent prayer, containing, alas! the usual formulæ about greed for gold and injustice and tyranny, but still effective and, at such a moment, very stirring. Without a word the burghers broke up, and each busied himself with the preparation of his gear and a last hurried meal.

Owing to the heavy state of the roads, I now endeavoured to find out the exact rendezvous, as I knew I should be unable to keep up with their march. It was, I was told, at Doornberg, a mountain some eight hours' journey away, near the drifts across the Buffalo, close to Dundee—some fifty or sixty miles off, perhaps. 'And the road?' 'We don't know; follow the spoor of the horses.' 'Haven't you got a map?' I asked. This was too good a joke to be lost, and others were invited to share the merriment that ensued. 'Maps!' Well, it was no particular concern of mine, after all, if they were content to have their ambulance some twenty miles from the fighting line, but I went round to see the pastor. To him I painted a harrowing picture of what was likely to happen to his congregation after an action unless I obtained a better outfit, and suggested the annexation of Beckett's ambulance section attached to the Pretoria Commando, consisting of three good and fully equipped wagons and eight trained men, British employés of the firm; the worthy divine grasped the situation and posted off to see General Joubert, with whom he was on most friendly terms. And before long he came back with the necessary authority.

Through mud and rain and mist we tramped wearily along all that day: there was plenty of meat, but it was too tough to be eaten by any one save a Boer or a native. It is needless to relate the details of that weary journey towards Utrecht through the Biggarsberg—the impossible descents and muddy sluits and weary climbs; the hauling of wagons by hundreds of willing hands; anxious moments as the wagons skidded round corners on two wheels, the wheel-mules jumping like springboks to keep their feet; the smashes, and the swearing, and the rain.

On Saturday, the 14th, we overtook the artillery, and found all the force encamped near Utrecht. The usual wonderful rumours were current, but in the post-office in the town were posted up the

first official telegrams of the war. Therein I read of the capture of the armoured train at Mafeking and the surrender of its crew (how the Boers gloated over that 'white flag'!), and Kimberley was stated to be surrounded. In the street we were told that Mafeking had been captured, that the British troops at Dundee were mostly boys, and were deserting *en masse*, and that the Irish regiments were on the verge of mutiny.

I had an interesting conversation with Lieut. Du Toit, of the State Artillery, as we rode out that morning from Utrecht. He was a smart, well-educated young colonial Dutchman, and had begun life as a surveyor in the Transvaal, but had joined the State Artillery, and had been, I believe, some time at Woolwich and a year in Germany. He was very full of the excellence of his arm and enthusiastic and optimistic about everything. With some diffidence I broached the subject of the coming campaign. 'Was that all the State Artillery that I saw at Volksrust, these three batteries?' 'Yes, that was all.' 'Do you mean to say that the Transvaal has no more guns than that?' 'Oh no; there were plenty more guns, but no men for them, and of course Cronje and Schalk Burger have also got some guns.' 'And is there, then, no reserve, no supply of trained artillerists you have been importing from Europe—do you mean to tell me that you're going to face the British Army with three batteries all told?' 'Oh yes; why not? our guns have a great deal better range, for they can send a shell six miles to the English four, and the French Creusots can fire much more rapidly too.' 'I suppose half your men are trained Germans?' I resumed, 'and can be relied on to stand staunchly to their guns?' 'Indeed, they are not, only Afrikanders are now admitted into the Artillery, and you'll hardly find a German in the ranks. There isn't one with my battery,' which was a fact. 'But about officers?' 'There are only two Germans in the whole corps, Lieut. von Wiegman and another; for the siege guns there are foreigners, but none with the field guns.' 'And how do you find these raw Transvaalers turn out?' 'Well, they're not beauties to look at, and their drill doesn't amount to much; but they understand horses and mules, and can ride, and it is wonderful how they pick up the shooting. After a few months' practice they make splendid practice, and judge distance really well.' 'And do you expect them to stand up to a heavy shell fire?' 'Oh yes, doctor, I think they will; they know they've got to do it.' I went away disturbed and thoughtful, thinking that there must soon be light in some dark

places. On Wednesday, the 18th, we reached by slow stages De Jager's Drift, on the Buffalo, where some important development was evidently pending.

One could now estimate pretty roughly the force under Lukas Meyer's orders, consisting of some four or five thousand horsemen, made up of the Middelburg, Krugersdorp, Bethal, Piet Retief, Utrecht, Wakkerstroom, and Vryheid commandos, accompanied by one battery of field artillery, of four fifteen-pounder field guns (two Krupps and two Creusots) and two Maxim-Nordenfelts. There was much talking, and many rumours were afloat. Thirteen thousand troops were said to be in the hills opposite, outside Dundee, waiting for our advance, with fourteen guns of position and three forts. Spies had seen these forts themselves. On the other hand 8,000 Natal rebels would join in and turn the British flank. Hitherto the only act of war on our part had been the capture of six Natal police at a store across the Buffalo, surprised one evening in the middle of a game of nap—an augury, perhaps, of future games of 'nap' in which others not police would be found taking part.

We now received our orders, and the men set out. During the earlier part of the night of the 19th the rain poured down in torrents and several Middelburgers sneaked back to camp for shelter: they had been sitting for hours in the darkness, they told us, and there was no sign yet of movement in the dense block of men and horses; the river was broad and the banks steep, and therefore many could not get over at a time. They gave us, moreover, an outline of the proposed attack, which was as follows. While Lukas Meyer's command surprised Dundee before dawn, from the east, General Erasmus with the Pretoria and other commandos and the field-guns were to attack simultaneously from the north; it was thought Joubert would slip in on the west, while the Free State menaced the rear. There were some 4,000 troops in Dundee, they said, with three batteries of artillery.

Dundee being some twelve miles distant from the drift, after a few hours' sleep they left again, and grey dawn was just breaking as I rode out of camp. Down the greasy road the wagons bumped and slipped across the stony bed of the river, with mishaps to chains and traces, and up the steep bank, into Natal. It gave me a strong thrill of repugnance to think that I was setting foot on British soil in the rear of an invading army, and that behind the horizon lay the indignant and astonished might of the Empire. As I passed a looted custom-house—its

doors and windows yawning blankly, pieces of broken furniture lying about, and papers scattered and trampled in the road—I began to realise the grim earnestness and purpose of war and the anomaly of my own position.

It was now no time for reflection, and there remained nothing to be done but to go forward. How I strained my ears to hear any sound! how my heart thumped as the low muffled explosions told me the battle had begun! How slowly these heavy wagons lumbered along over the heavy road inches deep in mud, trampled and cut up by thousands of hoofs! In spite of all endeavour the mules were at last reduced to a walk, and I could not leave them or I might never see them again. The reports followed one another more rapidly now, and the triple and quadruple bark of the 'pompom' sounded strange over all. After what seemed weary hours of splashing along through mist and rain, on coming over the shoulder of a hill we caught sight of the field of action. Some four miles away across the flat in front of us little white puffs were continuously breaking out over the crest of a low hill, and as the Transvaal guns used smokeless powder as well as the British, we knew these must be bursting shells. I was riding well ahead of the ambulances by this time, and had my wallets and saddle-bags stuffed with dressings, and was making 'Billy,' my horse, go his best, when I came across two Middelburgers whom I knew, and who had recently passed me on the road. They had drawn up alongside and were looking intently at some mounted men a few hundred yards away to the right, who had suddenly come into view through the mist, advancing slowly towards Dundee across the veldt. 'What Commando is that?' they asked suspiciously. 'Some of the burghers?' I questioned after looking. 'Can they be English?' 'We don't know.' 'They are in very regular formation.' Yes, but each field-cornet had been ordered the day previous to keep his men well apart from the others for better discipline, and perhaps they were doing it. At any rate it was quite clear where my duty lay, and I pushed on impatiently along the road. When a few riders detached themselves from the body, one crossing towards me and two going back, I felt rather pleased, and hoped for some information, and meanwhile kept my eyes fixed on my goal, the hill on which the shells were still bursting. The single horseman would cross the road about a hundred yards in front of me, I noticed, and he seemed in a hurry, so I determined not to shout to stop him. Suddenly a corporal

of hussars with a sword tilted over his shoulder, unnecessarily *en évidence*, I thought, was asking me to stop. I did so promptly, conscious that I must present rather a bedraggled spectacle with a large flapping slouch hat and soaked shabby mackintosh, and thanking my stars that I had carefully and prominently painted a Red Cross on both wallets and saddle-bags, and that I had been in too great a hurry to take my revolver with me. 'Who are you?' was the next question, and I explained meekly. I must come and see his officer.

The captain was waiting for us at the head of his men—18th Hussars, Natal Carabiniers and Mounted Infantry, the corporal had told me. 'Them Boers is getting 'ell on them 'ills, and we're waiting for 'em,' he had remarked on the way.

Colonel Möller now appeared on the scene. 'Have to keep you an' hour or two, of course, but that's all. You'll give me your parole not to go till you're told to,' and this I gave willingly. Captain Hardy, of the R.A.M.C., also came up. We chatted for a little time, and I learned that the Boers had managed to effect their surprise, as the first intimation the cavalry had of the seizure of Talana was the plopping of a shell into the middle of the camp. It was true that a report had come in during the night from two vedettes, that they had been fired upon by Boers along the drift road, but nobody believed them. They had not expected an attack from this direction, but from the north; the Boers' shells were not bursting well, it was added, and their guns were being silenced, and I smiled as I thought of what young Lieutenant Du Toit must be experiencing just then.

After a time the Hussars began to draw off, leaving us quite to ourselves: one lot took the south side of the Vant's Drift road, while Möller's men, with a Maxim and some prisoners, drew off slowly northwards.

On looking about I found that the Boers were beginning to leave the hills in which they were posted, and from which the crack of rifles was still incessant, and to swarm down into the plain like angry bees. A farmhouse, nestling close under the right-hand hill and displaying a large Red Cross flag, attracted my attention. I knew that the artillery doctor must be there, and towards it I directed the ambulances, not without considerable hesitation, for it was very evident that the Boers were retiring, and the plain might at any moment be swept by the shell

and Maxim fire of the pursuit. It was now about ten in the morning.

Presently I came up to some of the outermost Boers, and from them I learned, and saw even better from their demeanour, the extent of the disaster. They were demoralised and panic-stricken, and were riding aimlessly about; every now and then one or other would dismount and fire wildly over hills a mile distant in the direction of Dundee.

‘We have no commandants! No field-cornets! No orders! The whole affair is mismanaged! We have lost many men! The shell fire is playing havoc with us, and we cannot hold out!’ That was about the gist of their explanation.

They were anxious to know about the Hussars. ‘Were these the horsemen retiring over the hill in the rain?’ eagerly. ‘Have they a Maxim?’ anxiously. ‘Oh, they have!’ And that seemed to put a different aspect on affairs. As we plodded along towards our goal, however, we heard shots and saw a few Transvaalers scattered in pursuit of the Hussars, who were still retiring in a very leisurely manner, it seemed to me, northwards. As we approached the farmhouse we met a couple of the Transvaal guns retiring from Talana; the other had apparently been already withdrawn, at any rate no gun was abandoned, as has been erroneously stated.

The farmhouse, a solid building surrounded with stone walls and stone offices, presented an extraordinary appearance. The yard was full of horses, standing patiently with their bridles hanging down and saddles glistening in the rain; groups of them encumbered the gates. Boers in every imaginable state of mind were crowded in and out of the building: some stood talking, some rushed about, others sat quietly against the walls eating tinned food; some had their bandoliers and rifles, others had neither, but were hastily pinning on bits of red rag to their arms in the shape of a cross, or rushed after us entreating us for Red Cross badges; wounded men were being helped in by their friends, carried down in blankets or overcoats. Boers were constantly arriving from the hill above, on which the rifles still cracked out. Shrapnel whizzed noisily now and then overhead and buried itself in the soft earth. There was talking and confusion and shouting, and all looked angry and frightened.

I stepped into the house. Right opposite me, crumpled up in the passage, lay the body of Field-cornet Joubert, of the Middelburgers; a little round hole in the centre of his four-coloured hat-

band seemed to tell its tale. A room to the left was full of sopping-wet wounded Boers lying about in every attitude—some alone, some supported by their friends. In a room to the right the little German artillery doctor welcomed me warmly and asked for dressings. On a large bed lay Lieut. Du Toit, his leg shattered by shrapnel. Beside him lay an artillery private shot through both lungs. The floor was covered with wounded; pools of water and of blood lay everywhere; every room was full of groaning forms. I broke into the tiny pantry and established myself there at once, and for an hour or more was busy dressing hastily man after man as they were brought in. The occasional scream of a shell over the roof told me the fight was not yet over. There was at length a moment's breathing space, and I went outside to try and see what was going on. Just then a young Boer came up and asked me for the loan of a Red Cross flag. Astonished at the demand I asked him what he wanted it for. 'I have this note to give to the English,' he said, showing me a little scrap of folded paper. 'It's from General Lukas Meyer.' It was the leaf of a small notebook, and its contents, beautifully written in pencil and in English, ran thus, as far as I can remember:—

'To the Officer Commanding the British Troops.

'Sir,—I have the honour to request you to consent to an armistice for the purpose of allowing me to gather my wounded and bury my dead.

(Signed) 'LUKAS MEYER, General, Transvaal Forces.'

A thrill of astonishment ran through me as I read and realised how great must be the consternation when such a request could be made by the previously cocksure Transvaalers.

The next thing I remember was a clear English voice asking who was in charge of this hospital, and the voice of Dr. Van der Merve modestly replying that he thought he was. I went out and found a flushed and panting subaltern of Dublin Fusiliers—his helmet pushed back, a sword in one hand, a revolver in the other—at his back a half-company of grimy, panting soldiers with fixed bayonets. Others were collecting Mausers and bandoliers and saddles, and heaping them in a Scotch cart, and there were sentries at the gates. The British had taken possession—the hill was theirs.

Later on, away out in the plain, a body of men became visible through the drizzling rain, advancing along the road towards us

from the Boer positions. Who were they? What was happening? No one knew—the only orders left with the officer were to keep the position, and he had now only about twenty-five men with him. It was safer for him at any rate to withdraw into the kopje in case they were the Boers coming back. A few quiet orders were given, the men formed up and marched stolidly away, the riders approached and passed along towards Dundee, evidently the returning cavalry; our garrison reappeared, and shortly afterwards again withdrew for good as night closed on the scene. Late in the evening Lieutenant Crum, of the Rifles, and a mounted man were brought in badly wounded and attended to, having, however, to lie on the ground in an outside storeroom. The wounded had now all been seen to and fed, and were all asleep, tired out and utterly exhausted, some never to awake. They bore their wounds stolidly and well did these farmers, and the awe and shock of their first battle and of death visible and stalking among them were plainly to be seen in their looks and speech.

In the farmhouse that night there lay seventy wounded Transvaalers, besides two British officers and three privates; a certain number of wounded Boers, amounting, perhaps, to fifteen or twenty, had ridden or been taken back to De Jager's Drift, and some thirty-nine or forty dead lay where they had fallen. The total Boer loss that day could therefore be put down at a hundred wounded and forty killed, and I believe a few were taken as prisoners into Dundee—making at a liberal estimate a loss of 150 men.

When quiet fell and my work for the day ended and I had time to think and talk, the full story of the day gradually unfolded itself among those who remained awake. Advancing from the drift the burghers had arrived unopposed and unobserved on the top of Talana, though some scouts had been in contact with them in the flats; and their guns had been got into position and opened fire on the unsuspecting camp at dawn at a range of 4,200 yards. The artillery were blamed for having begun firing before all the Boers had got into position; at any rate considerable confusion ensued, and when the British guns returned an awful shower of shrapnel directed with deadly accuracy all discipline vanished.

The Transvaal guns were very soon silenced; Lieut. Du Toit told me that he and an artilleryman named Schulz had worked a Krupp and a 'pompom' alone till they were both struck down at the same time. The German artillery doctor told me that one of the artillery captains came to the hospital early in the fight, saying he felt sick, and remained there till the retirement began.

The troops, they said, had come out into the open in their time-honoured and expected style, had attacked the hill in their best go-ahead manner and had been shot in droves; but the shell fire had been too much for Boer flesh and blood to stand. Several of the prominent citizens of Middelburg had sat under a stone wall near the hospital the whole morning smoking peacefully, alleging that they could get no orders—hundreds of others had done the same—in fact it was thought that not more than 500 men were firing during the day; the others had got behind rocks, and had remained there. The brunt of the day had been borne by the Utrecht and Wakkerstroom men, who were supporting the guns and had first come into position; in fact they contributed most of the casualties.

A young Utrecht boy named Vermaak specially attracted my notice. Shot through the right arm himself, he paid no attention to his wound, but sat patiently on a couch holding his grey-haired father in his arms. The old man was mortally wounded in the back by a shrapnel bullet and could not lie down. Out of a little body of five friends and companions who had gone together into battle, the boy and his father were the only two alive, he told me, with tears in his eyes. The old man died the next morning.

The night was dark and stormy, there were no lanterns, and everybody was exhausted, so I had reluctantly to postpone the search for the wounded till the morning. The Boers, moreover, were frightened to go out, for the 'Dublins,' when bringing in their dead and wounded that afternoon, had threatened several of them, and two or three, I was told, had been arrested and brought into Dundee.

Morning at last broke, and my first thought was about the unfortunates who might be still lying out where they fell. I found the kitchen already full of Boers drinking coffee, and at first not one would stir a step; but by hustling them out roughly, dashing the cups from their hands, and in other ways startling them, I forced three stretcher parties out to look for their brethren. Nor was their search in vain, for three or four men were found and brought in, one of whom had been forcibly robbed by natives of his mackintosh the night before. The natives, I was told, were stripping and robbing the Boer dead, but I could do nothing to stop it, and there were no signs of the troops. As soon as I was able I sent an urgent message to General Lukas Meyer telling him there were about eighty wounded Boers lying in the farmhouse, and that food and stimulants were required

for them, as well as transport to get them back to the drift, and also men to help to bury the dead (to this no reply, I may mention, was ever received), and I then made my way to the hill-top. The wheel tracks of the guns were still cut deep in the soft earth, and at every step almost one trod on a shrapnel bullet or a piece of the interior of a shell. Further up lay a couple of dead artillery horses and some Creusot and Nordenfelt ammunition, and then dotted here and there white naked legs showed clearly against the sodden earth. Here lay a trampled helmet with a tiny bullet hole through it and a stain of blood inside; there a black soft felt hat with a large hole in it; close by a half-naked bearded man stared stonily heavenward with teeth clenched; by him a body with a handsome boyish face like his own, a half-smiling expression still on it—father and son evidently—shattered rocks, empty cartridge-cases, tattered mackintoshes; and overhead in the dripping sky slowly circled the aasvogels. The rain was falling noiselessly, and a dull heavy silence seemed to brood over the hilltop.

It seemed as if two opposing waves had dashed themselves against each other and again receded, leaving Talana high and dry and desolate with its dead. Looking down the steep slope of the hill facing Dundee, I could not but wonder at the pluck and madness which had driven men against it. The upper and steeper part of the descent and the crest were covered with large boulders, affording excellent shelter; halfway down the hill a low stone wall running around it afforded splendid cover, and had been held by the Boers; a farmhouse, thickly surrounded with trees at the base, had fortunately afforded protection for the attacking troops. The summit of Talana was an irregular broken tableland, covered with stones and intersected by stone walls, quite out of sight of the guns in the plains below; and I saw how fortunate a thing it was that the Boers had so early been demoralised by the shell fire, and why some of the older ones had felt so bitter at abandoning the position.

At intervals during that day came the sounds of cannon fire from the north-west, and we thought it might be Joubert engaged in the attack which should have taken place the day before. In reality it was the big gun on Impati getting the range of the English camp, and in the evening the distant rattle of guns at Elandslaagte broke the stillness. An ambulance I sent into Dundee that afternoon returned with the rather astonishing news that the troops had abandoned the town and had gone out to some

distant hills. It appears that they lay all day in camp till the afternoon, when a shell from the Boer big gun on Impati burst suddenly among them, and was followed by a hasty flight from the camp, most of the men only rallying at Idumeni hill the next morning after spending the whole night in the rain. Stranger still it is to hear that the authorities were quite cognisant of the fact that the Boers had been unloading a gun from the train and dragging it up Impati mountain, but assumed that it was only a field-gun, and that their own would soon knock it out of action.

During Sunday the 22nd my principal concern was to form some idea of what was happening in Dundee. While watching through my glasses that morning from the hill I saw long columns of overcoated troops coming back slowly from the westward towards their camp, and then after a time I turned to go home. I was hardly halfway down the hill when some seven loud reports rapidly followed one another, and when I had hastily returned the shelling had stopped, and all I could see were two black columns retreating. It was very mysterious to me then, but these shots seem to have decided the abandonment of the entire camp and the subsequent retreat.

The Boers were much dispirited at their reverse, and blamed their generals and officers very freely. They were especially bitter about the Commando now on Impati, under General Erasmus, which was shelling Dundee. It appears that Erasmus got his men into position, as previously arranged, in time to join in the attack on Friday, but, owing to not being able to see far on account of the fog, had refused to allow his men, who were keen enough, to go forward to the help of Meyer. He had a couple of guns with him besides 'Long Tom,' and some two or three thousand men, and could have been of material assistance. It was into one of his laagers—the Standerton, I believe—that the missing squadrons of Hussars, under Colonel Möller, stumbled, weary, hungry, and exhausted, on the Saturday morning. They had dismounted and held a stone kraal till a couple of guns were brought to bear, upon which they surrendered. Had they but swept backward towards the drift, they could have sacked the whole camp there.

On Monday morning, after a final look at Dundee from the top of Talana, I inspanned my ambulance and returned to Lukas Meyer's column, then lying among the hills some few miles away.

There I received the first news of the fight at Elandslaagte, which varied considerably as it was told by German or Boer.

The version of the latter was that early on Saturday a train full of liquor had been captured by the German and Hollander Commandos, who promptly got intoxicated on its contents, and that while in a helpless condition the British had fallen upon them and had slaughtered them, and also killed or captured many leading Boers. The other version was that the foreigners had died defending their position, the sons of the soil having run away early. At any rate Colonel Schiel had been captured with two guns, and General Kock was wounded and a prisoner. The total loss was uncertain. The event did not seem to depress the burghers much. The 'verdomde' foreigners had suffered as they deserved—that was the general impression. What seemed of much greater moment was the fact that the troops had abandoned Dundee, but no one seemed to know anything further. They considered the retreat due to the battle of Friday and to the enormous British loss there, which was estimated to be at least four or five hundred killed. Great tales of valour were current. He was a poor specimen of a Boer who had not accounted for five or six soldiers to his own gun, besides joining in the pursuit which led to the eventual capture of the Hussars.

The next morning, Tuesday 24th, found us all spread out in the plain in marching order behind Talana awaiting orders. Some move was evidently impending, we could not find out what—the men were on the *qui vive* and restless. At length we moved along, leaving Dundee on our right, and the news spread that we were in chase of 2,000 British troops, who were flying to Help-makaar—presumably the Dundee garrison. Dr. Reinhard and I took the opportunity of slipping round Talana, as we passed, to the farmhouse among the trees at the foot, where the storming parties had re-formed for the final rush.

The stone walls around the garden and the trees in it were all splashed and cut by bullets; a half-finished pit yawned dismally and suggestively in the shade; and turning a corner a horrible sight met our eyes. A small outbuilding stood behind the main one, and all around it, on stretchers on the ground, and on the stoep, lay the British dead, exposed to rain and wind and sun; inside too the floor was covered with them; accoutrements and even rifles lay about. Boers were taking bayonets and mess tins and puzzling over emergency rations. We counted twenty-eight bodies there. Only then did I realise how great must have been the need of flight which could have forced a British commander thus to leave his gallant men, and a sickening feeling came over

one that the blunders of 1880 were being repeated on a larger scale by a professional class which had, as it seemed, apparently learned nothing and forgotten nothing.

We rejoined the commando, and presently sharp and clear came the rattle of guns from the Rietfontein fight many miles away. Dr. Reinhard had returned to Dundee with his wagon, and he came back with much detail as to the completeness of the rout. Wounded, sick, clothing, stores, mess-kit, everything had been left behind in the standing tents; the shops were being pillaged; and General Penn Symons had been buried there that morning. To us who knew the demoralised condition of the burghers the retreat seemed inexplicable. Some madness seemed to have seized these hardy troops, who had given so good an account of themselves at Talana, or very possibly some terrible pressure we knew nothing of had caused this ill-omened retreat. At any rate the Boers had begun their campaign well.

On the march we found out how great had been the moral effect of Friday's battle on the Boers, for most of the Commandos were shorn of half their strength. The farmers had in many instances ridden straight home from the field; thus the Piet Retief burghers, who went into action some 400 strong and had lost about fifteen men, now mustered only some ninety—the others had vanished; not for long, however, for they were very soon driven back. Through mud and rain the long column hurried in in a vain attempt to overtake General Yule. We passed dead horses and broken-down wagons and old camping grounds, but we had started too late, and the opportunity was lost.

On Thursday, the 26th, we encamped among some bush-clad hills about twelve miles away to the east of Ladysmith, and the report spread that we were to attack in the morning. We were all up and ready at three, but the column only began to move at seven. No sooner had the march fairly started than some seven cannon-shots rang out to our front, and also a few rounds of 'pom-pom,' and we thought a fight had begun; but it turned out to be a small body of British cavalry who had retired, losing a horse. Across a long broken and hilly plain we now saw the mountains behind which Ladysmith lay—Bulwaan and Lombard's Kop, as they became known to us and the world later—and over the ridge between the two peered out a balloon, grey and indistinct in the distance. We did not proceed far, for Lukas Meyer had not got into touch with any other Boer forces yet, and we soon encamped. At 11 A.M. there was a sudden bustle and hurry and call to arms and a gallop-

ing about of burghers and a shifting of artillery guns from kopje to kopje. I went up to the hill upon which the General stood and found two guns in position and a little breastwork of stones being rapidly piled up around them ; burghers were pulling about rocks to convenient places or lay in groups behind any likely cover ; and there I saw the cause of alarm—a cloud of dust rising from the road over the nek between Bulwaan and Lombard's Kop. Guns and horses had been distinguished some four miles distant, and an attack was now expected. As I stood near the General, the heliograph was busy searching all the hills to the north-west for a sign of the other leaders. Suddenly an answering light flashed back, and we learned that about six miles away on our right front lay Commandant Weilbach with two guns, and that Joubert with Colonel Trichard lay beyond him.

The rocky sides of Bulwaan frowned down at us in the plain ; it was said to be full of soldiers, and Sir George White with 15,000 picked troops lay waiting behind it. Altogether the position, as far as the Transvaalers were concerned, did not seem to me to be over-hopeful, and I was careful to place my ambulance out of any probable line of retreat. It was, however, a false alarm, and there we lay for a few days, the men suffering much from diarrhoea and lack of food—for meat only was plentiful ; 5s. was offered for a loaf of bread, and one could get half a hartebeest for a handful of salt or sugar. Here too we first heard the result of the battle of Rietfontein, in which the Orange Free State were said to have repulsed a British attack with great slaughter, losing only a couple of men themselves, and we learnt that the long-range guns had arrived.

Sunday, the 29th, passed off quietly as far as hostilities were concerned, and we heard a general attack on Sir G. White was to be made on Tuesday or Wednesday next.

Early next morning, the 30th, we were roused by the sound of heavy firing, and our sleepy eyes soon discerned the little white puffs of shrapnel bursting on top of a flat hill to our right front. The firing was extremely sharp, and the little smoke balls spouted out all along the ridge ; an inward feeling of satisfaction spread through me at the thought that now the Boers would find out what a British army could do.

For at least a couple of hours Meyer's Commando lay quietly looking on and cooking their breakfasts. At length some order seemed to come, for the men suddenly and quickly mounted and

rode away obliquely to the right front, in the direction of Lombard's Kop.

As rapidly as possible we followed; but guns and men had already vanished among the wooded kopjes, and having gone as far as practicable with the wagons, and hearing Transvaal guns opening fire close to us, I dismounted and made my way through the bush towards the artillery, where I hoped to find out where the Middelburg Commando had got to. After much wandering amid the bushes I came at last upon two Krupp guns and two Maxim-Nordenfelts, under the command of Lieut. Von Wiegman, of the State Artillery, who had been with our column at Dundee. He was strolling about in the neat black gold-laced uniform—the only artillery officer in the campaign who wore it—and seemed highly pleased with himself; he hailed me in a friendly manner, and told me I was just in time to see some fun. My heart sank at the idea of the fun he was likely to show me just then, and I asked what it was. 'Oh, we're firing at that battery down there, and they don't know where we are, and are shelling that ridge in front there. See the shells bursting?' And sure enough all along a ridge, some 300 yards in front, little black fountains of earth and stones were spouting up in rapid succession. Only at rare intervals did some fragment come whizzing and buzzing over our heads to suggest a possibility of danger. The English battery was distinguishable only by the flash to the naked eye, but the glass showed six little brown objects in a row on the plain, dangerously close to which the Krupps were sending shell after shell.

The ridge on which the guns stood was bushy, but there was otherwise little good cover, and it was crowded with Boers, all crouching and hiding, although as yet there was no danger. The range was about 4,500 metres, and both batteries were using percussion shell.

Away to the left from the slopes of Lombard's Kop came a continuous rattle of musketry and the ear-splitting crack of Creusot guns; continual messages were coming to the lieutenant asking him to turn on his Maxims and silence some British Maxims in that direction, which were causing much alarm if not damage; but, peer as he might through his field-glass in that direction, he could see nothing.

From some guns on the right came news that they were doing tremendous execution among the troops who were in full

retreat all over the flats. Across the plain away to the west a huge column of smoke marked where the celebrated Long Tom was in action: from batteries invisible to us showers of shrapnel were constantly bursting around it, some ridiculously short, others exactly over it. The British retreating! Was it possible? Surely these Dutchmen were lying! The musketry was ever sputtering and crackling away on the slopes of Lombard's Kop, but not a soul, not even a flash, was visible, and on either side of us the Transvaal guns were firing incessantly. Presently there was a movement visible in the British battery; the teams were brought up, they were changing position—retiring? No; wheeling, advancing, to get closer range. Shells burst around them, over them, behind them as they raced; they drew into line, unlimbered, and were again in action, all, it seemed, in a moment, but still with no better idea of the range.

The firing was gradually decreasing and moving towards Ladysmith, so I knew that the Boers could not have been defeated; but I consoled myself with the idea that the affair must have been only a reconnaissance: 15,000 men couldn't have been beaten in so short a time, I thought.

I was soon sent for to go to Lombard's Kop to attend to some wounded. I came to the foot of a conical hill, halfway up the slope of which lay panting burghers; others stood talking, their voices shaky, eyes bright, the lust of fight and excitement of battle plainly visible. Two dead men lay close by covered with blankets, a few tearful friends near. Under the shadow of some trees lay five wounded men, Krugersdorpers, the sun shaded from them by willing hands.

They were all wounded in the head, and I was told the British fire had been terrific, and that not a man dared to show his head above the kopje, and that they had been unable to distinguish a single man. 'They can't have been soldiers,' they said; and they insisted that it must have been volunteers who had fought them.

Further on I met the Middelburgers, who had lost only one man wounded: they were on their way out to capture a Maxim which had been abandoned. Four guns, they told me, had also been captured, and the British positions were being now occupied.

The house of a farmer named De Waal, then a suspect in prison in Ladysmith, lay close at hand, in the gorge between Lombard's Kop and Bulwaan, and I converted it into a field

hospital and removed the wounded thither. Shortly afterwards my ambulance brought in General Lukas Meyer, who had collapsed during the fight, having been ill for the previous week ; and details of the fighting began to trickle out as men went and came. The Free Staters and Johannesburg Police had captured 1,400 men, we were told, who had been attempting a flank attack, but this of course we disbelieved with scorn.

The British shell had generally all fallen short, but had made it very lively at times round the big gun, and the loss on the Boer side was about twenty-two killed and some sixty wounded. All this we received at first with considerable scepticism, but time proved that the information was but too true. It was difficult to believe that an army of 15,000 had been defeated and driven back into Ladysmith by the irregular, happy-go-lucky methods of the burghers ; and, knowing how prone the latter were to exaggerate every success, we thought it would prove to have been but a reconnaissance, and that the real tug of war had yet to come.

The Boers were full of the performance of the big gun—the ‘Franz cannon,’ as they called it—and were confident that Ladysmith and the troops lay at their mercy ; and that, I believe, as much as any other reason, prevented their pressing home their undoubted advantage. Only on the Thursday did they complete the investment by cutting the railway line, and contemplate the possibility of a siege—which none of them, I am certain, considered would last more than a week or ten days. The effect of big-gun fire on a fortified position was an unknown quantity, and this idea of an approaching capitulation undoubtedly saved Natal from being entirely overrun at that time. The joy of the burghers that evening was intense, and from the laagers came the sound of hymns and rejoicing.

On the Tuesday an armistice had been arranged, and an extraordinary quiet reigned, and fuller reports came in, confirming the capture of the unfortunate 1,200 at Nicholson’s Nek. It was a piece of luck on the Boer side, to a great extent, for the Johannesburg Police Commando had changed their position, for some reason, late on Sunday afternoon, and into them the British had stumbled during the night ; when day broke the latter were found to be occupying a very untenable position, which they were forced to surrender. But, nevertheless, it is not hard to imagine what would have happened to an isolated

force with four little mountain popguns, even if all had gone as was intended.

Towards sundown I rode over the Nek and had a glimpse into the town, but there was nothing to be seen. Huge clouds of dust were arising from the road to Cæsar's Camp—a high flat-topped hill to the south-east of Ladysmith—and one could not guess what would be the next move, for the idea of a siege seemed preposterous.

That evening I had my only interview with General Joubert. A troop of well-mounted burghers clattered up to the hospital; several dismounted and went in to see Meyer, and I was told the Commandant-General was one of them. He came out—a small man with grey hair and beard, a hard hat, black coat with a full bandolier across it—and I introduced myself and asked him if any instructions could be issued about the doctors attached to each Commando staying with their men, as at present I had to do work for five Commandos. He answered in a high-pitched, querulous voice, 'Oh, I can't do anything. All you doctors say the same thing.' I then mentioned the names of the Commandos I was attending, and told him that I had not medicine sufficient for so many men and could procure none. 'I'll see what I can do,' he said, and rode away; and of course nothing ever came of it.

The bolder spirits among the burghers were pretty free in their criticisms about Joubert. They realised that the British should have been closely followed up in their retreat on Monday, and that considerable time had been wasted after the declaration of war before sweeping into Natal. Joubert was too careful of life, they said.

All this time, moreover, trains had been running in and out of Ladysmith, and it was only on November 2 that the line was destroyed, when it was realised that Sir George White had no immediate intention of surrendering. The following day passed off quietly. A few pot-shots were taken at the balloon, I believe, from some Creusot field-guns which had been dragged up Umbulwaan—whither I climbed and watched through the glass the distant troops moving about Cæsar's Camp. Buller's arrival was expected, and it was said his arrangements were to enter the Free State *via* Kimberley—a pretty correct forecast of his original intention.

(*To be continued.*)

MRS. RADCLIFFE'S NOVELS.

BY ANDREW LANG.

DOES any one now read Mrs. Radcliffe, or am I the only wanderer in her windy corridors, listening timidly to groans and hollow voices, and shielding the flame of a lamp, which, I fear, will presently flicker out, and leave me in darkness? People know the name of 'The Mysteries of Udolpho;' they know that boys would say to Thackeray, at school, 'Old fellow, draw us Vivaldi in the Inquisition.' But have they penetrated into the chill galleries of the Castle of Udolpho? Have they shuddered for Vivaldi in face of the sable-clad and masked Inquisition? Certainly Mrs. Radcliffe, within the memory of man, has been extremely popular. The thick double-columned volume in which I peruse the works of the Enchantress belongs to a public library. It is quite the dirtiest, greasiest, most dog's-eared, and most bescribbled tome in the collection. Many of the books have remained, during the last hundred years, uncut, even to this day, and I have had to apply the paper knife to many an author, from Alciphron (1790) to Mr. Max Müller, and Dr. Birkbeck Hill's edition of Bozzy's 'Life of Dr. Johnson.' But Mrs. Radcliffe has been read diligently, and copiously annotated.

This lady was, in a literary sense, and though, like the sire of Evelina, he cast her off, the daughter of Horace Walpole. Just when King Romance seemed as dead as Queen Anne, Walpole produced that Gothic tale, 'The Castle of Otranto,' in 1764. In that very year was born Anne Ward, who, in 1787, married William Radcliffe, Esq., M.A. Oxon. In 1789 she published 'The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne.' The scene, she tells us, is laid in 'the most romantic part of the Highlands, the north-east coast of Scotland.' On castles, anywhere, she doted. Walpole, not Smollett or Miss Burney, inspired her with a passion for these homes of old romance. But the north-east coast of Scotland is hardly part of the Highlands at all, and is far from being very romantic. The period is 'the dark ages' in general. Yet the captive Earl, when 'the sweet tranquillity of evening threw an air of tender melancholy over his mind . . . composed the following

sonnet, which (having committed it to paper) he the next evening dropped upon the terrace. He had the pleasure to observe that the paper was taken up by the ladies, who immediately retired into the castle.' These were not the manners of the local Mackays, of the Sinclairs, and of 'the small but fierce clan of Gunn,' in the dark ages.

But this was Mrs. Radcliffe's way. She delighted in descriptions of scenery, the more romantic the better, and usually drawn entirely from her inner consciousness. Her heroines write sonnets (which never but once *are* sonnets) and other lyrics, on every occasion. With his usual generosity Scott praised her landscape and her lyrics, but, indeed, they are, as Sir Walter said of Mrs. Hemans, 'too poetical,' and probably they were skipped, even by her contemporary devotees. 'The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne' frankly do not permit themselves to be read, and it was not till 1790, with 'A Sicilian Romance,' that Mrs. Radcliffe 'found herself,' and her public. After reading, with breathless haste, through 'A Sicilian Romance,' and 'The Romance of the Forest,' in a single day, it would ill become me to speak lightly of Mrs. Radcliffe. Like Catherine Morland, I love this lady's tender yet terrific fancy.

Mrs. Radcliffe does not always keep on her highest level, but we must remember that her last romance, 'The Italian,' is by far her best. She had been feeling her way to this pitch of excellence, and, when she had attained to it, she published no more. The reason is uncertain. Scott thinks that she may have been annoyed by her imitators, or by her critics, against whom he defends her in an admirable passage, to be cited later. Meanwhile let us follow Mrs. Radcliffe in her upward course.

The 'Sicilian Romance' appeared in 1790, when the author's age was twenty-six. The book has a treble attraction, for it contains the germ of 'Northanger Abbey,' and the germ of 'Jane Eyre,' and—the germ of Byron! Like 'Joseph Andrews,' 'Northanger Abbey' began as a parody (of Mrs. Radcliffe) and developed into a real novel of character. So too Byron's gloomy scowling adventurers, with their darkling past, are mere repetitions in rhyme of Mrs. Radcliffe's Schedoni. This is so obvious that, when discussing Mrs. Radcliffe's Schedoni, Scott adds, in a note, parallel passages from Byron's 'Giaour.' Sir Walter did not mean to mock, he merely compared two kindred spirits. 'The noble poet' 'kept on the business still,' and broke into octo-

syllabics, borrowed from Scott, his descriptions of miscreants borrowed from Mrs. Radcliffe.

'A Sicilian Romance' has its scene in the palace of Ferdinand, fifth Marquis of Mazzini, on the northern coast of Sicily. The time is about 1580, but there is nothing in the manners or costume to indicate that, or any other period. Such 'local colour' was unknown to Mrs. Radcliffe, as to Clara Reeve. In Horace Walpole, however, a character goes so far in the mediæval way as to say 'by my halidome.'

The Marquis Mazzini had one son and two daughters by his first amiable consort, supposed to be long dead when the story opens. The son is the origin of Henry Tilney in 'Northanger Abbey,' and in General Tilney does Catherine Morland recognise a modern Marquis of Mazzini. But the Marquis's wife, to be sure, is *not* dead; like the first Mrs. Rochester she is concealed about the back premises, and, as in 'Jane Eyre,' it is her movements, and those of her gaolers, that produce mystery, and make the reader suppose that 'the place is haunted.' It is, of course, only the mystery and the 'machinery' of Mrs. Radcliffe that Miss Brontë adapted. These passages in 'Jane Eyre' have been censured, but it is not easy to see how the novel could do without them. Mrs. Radcliffe's tale entirely depends on its machinery. Her wicked Marquis, having secretly immured Number One, has now a new and beautiful wife, whose character, alas! does not bear inspection. This domestic position, as Number Two, as we know, was declined by the austere virtue of Jane Eyre.

'Phenomena' begin in the first chapter of 'A Sicilian Romance,' mysterious lights wander about uninhabited parts of the castle, and are vainly investigated by young Ferdinand, son of the Marquis. Meanwhile Hippolitus the Chaste, loved all in vain by the reigning Marchioness, is adored by, and adores, her step-daughter, Julia. Jealousy and revenge are clearly indicated. But, in chasing mysterious lights and figures through mouldering towers, Ferdinand gets into the very undesirable position of David Balfour, when he climbs, in the dark, the broken turret stair in his uncle's house of Shaws (in 'Kidnapped'). Here is a *fourth* author indebted to Mrs. Radcliffe: her disciples are Miss Austen, Byron, Miss Brontë, and Mr. Louis Stevenson! Ferdinand began the ascent. He had not proceeded very far, when the stones of a step which his foot had just quitted gave way, and, dragging with them those adjoining, formed a chasm in the stair-

case that terrified even Ferdinand, who was left tottering on the suspended half of the steps, in momentary expectation of falling to the bottom with the stone on which he rested. In the terror which this occasioned, he attempted to save himself by catching at a kind of beam which suspended over the stairs, when the lamp dropped from his hand, and he was left in total darkness.

Can anything be more 'amazing horrid,' above all as there are mysterious figures in and about the tower? Mrs. Radcliffe's lamps always fall, or are blown out, in the nick of time, an expedient already used by Clara Reeve in that very mild but once popular ghost story, 'The Old English Baron' (1777). All authors have such favourite devices, and I wonder how many fights Mr. Stanley Weyman's heroes have fought, from the cellar to their favourite tilting ground, the roof of a strange house!

Ferdinand hung on to the beam for an hour, when the ladies came with a light, and he scrambled back to solid earth. In his next nocturnal research, 'a sullen groan arose from beneath where he stood,' and when he tried to force a door (there are scores of such weird doors in Mrs. Radcliffe) 'a groan was repeated, more hollow and dreadful than the first. His courage forsook him'—and no wonder! Of course he could not know that the author of the groans was, in fact, his long-lost mother, immured by his father, the wicked Marquis. We need not follow the narrative through the darkling crimes and crumbling galleries of this terrible castle on the north coast of Sicily. Everybody is always 'gazing in silent terror,' and all the locks are rusty. 'A savage and dexterous banditti' play a prominent part, and the imprisoned Ferdinand 'did not hesitate to believe that the moans he heard came from the restless spirit of the murdered della Campo.' No working hypothesis could seem more plausible to Mr. Frederic Myers, but it was erroneous. Mrs. Radcliffe does not deal in a single avowed ghost. She finally explains away, by normal causes, everything that she does not forget to explain. At the most, she indulges herself in a premonitory dream. On this point she is true to common sense, without quite adopting the philosophy of David Hume. 'I do not say that spirits have appeared,' she remarks, 'but if several discreet unprejudiced persons were to assure me that they had seen one—I should not be bold or proud enough to reply, it is impossible!' But Hume *was* bold and proud enough: he went further than Mrs. Radcliffe.

Scott censures Mrs. Radcliffe's employment of explanations. He is in favour of 'boldly avowing the use of supernatural machinery,' or of leaving the matter in the vague, as in the appearance of the wraith of the dying Alice to Ravenswood. But, in Mrs. Radcliffe's day, common sense was so tyrannical, that the poor lady's romances would have been excluded from families, if she had not provided normal explanations of her groans, moans, voices, lights, and wandering figures. The ghost hunt in the castle finally brings Julia to a door, whose bolts, 'strengthened by desperation, she forced back.' There was a middle-aged lady in the room, who, after steadily gazing on Julia, 'suddenly exclaimed, "My daughter!" and fainted away.' Julia being about seventeen, and Madame Mazzini, her mamma, having been immured for fifteen years, we observe, in this recognition, the force of the maternal instinct.

The wicked Marquis was poisoned by the partner of his iniquities, who anon stabbed herself with a poniard. The virtuous Julia marries the chaste Hippolitus, and, says the author, 'in reviewing this story, we perceive a singular and striking instance of moral retribution.'

We also remark the futility of locking up an inconvenient wife, fabled to be defunct, in one's own country house. Had Mr. Rochester studied the 'Sicilian Romance,' he would have shunned an obsolete system, inconvenient at best, and apt, in the long run, to be disastrous.

In the 'Romance of the Forest' (1791) Mrs. Radcliffe remained true to Mr. Stanley Weyman's favourite period, the end of the sixteenth century. But there are no historical characters or costumes in the story, and all the persons, as far as language and costume go, might have been alive in 1791.

The story runs thus: One de la Motte, who appears to have fallen from dissipation to swindling, is, on the first page, discovered flying from Paris and the law, with his wife, in a carriage. Lost in the dark on a moor, he follows a light, and enters an old lonely house. He is seized by ruffians, locked in, and expects to be murdered, which he knows that he cannot stand, for he is timid by nature. In fact, a ruffian puts a pistol to La Motte's breast with one hand, while with the other he drags along a beautiful girl of eighteen. 'Swear that you will convey this girl where I may never see her more,' exclaims the bully, and La Motte, with the young lady, is taken back to his carriage. 'If

you return within an hour you will be welcomed with a brace of bullets,' is the ruffian's parting threat.

So La Motte, Madame La Motte, and the beautiful girl drive away, La Motte's one desire being to find a retreat safe from the police of an offended justice.

Is this not a very original, striking, and affecting situation; provocative, too, of the utmost curiosity? A fugitive from justice, in a strange, small, dark, ancient house, is seized, threatened, and presented with a young and lovely female stranger. In this opening we recognise the hand of a master genius. There *must* be an explanation of proceedings so highly unconventional, and what can the reason be? The reader is *empoigné* in the first page, and eagerly follows the flight of La Motte, also of Peter, his coachman, an attached, comic, and familiar domestic. After a few days, the party observe, in the recesses of a gloomy forest, the remains of a Gothic abbey. They enter; by the light of a flickering lamp they penetrate 'horrible recesses,' discover a room handsomely provided with a trapdoor, and determine to reside in a dwelling so congenial, though, as La Motte judiciously remarks, 'not in all respects strictly Gothic.' After a few days, La Motte finds that somebody is inquiring for him in the nearest town. He seeks for a hiding-place, and explores the chambers under the trapdoor. Here he finds, in a large chest—what do you suppose he finds? It was a human skeleton! Yet in this awful vicinity he and his wife, with Adeline (the fair stranger) conceal themselves. The brave Adeline, when footsteps are heard, and a figure is beheld in the upper rooms, accosts the stranger. His keen eye presently detects the practical trapdoor, he raises it, and the cowering La Motte recognises in the dreaded visitor—his own son, who had sought him out in filial affection.

Already Madame La Motte has become jealous of Adeline, especially as her husband is oddly melancholy, and apt to withdraw into a glade, where he mysteriously disappears into the recesses of a Gothic sepulchre. This, to the watchful eyes of a wife, is proof of faithlessness on the part of a husband. As the son, Louis, really falls in love with Adeline, Madame La Motte becomes doubly unkind, and Adeline now composes quantities of poems to Night, to Sunset, to the Nocturnal Gale, and so on.

In this uncomfortable situation, two strangers arrive in a terrific thunderstorm. One is young, the other is a Marquis. On seeing this nobleman, 'La Motte's limbs trembled, and a ghastly

paleness overspread his countenance. The Marquis was little less agitated, and was, at first, decidedly hostile. La Motte implored forgiveness—for what?—and the Marquis (who, in fact, owned the Abbey, and had a shooting lodge not far off) was mollified. They all became rather friendly, and Adeline asked La Motte about the stories of hauntings, and a murder said to have been, at some time, committed in the Abbey. La Motte said that the Marquis could have no connection with such fables; still there *was* the skeleton.

Meanwhile, Adeline had conceived a flame for Theodore, the young officer who accompanied his colonel, the Marquis; on their first visit to the family, Theodore, who returned her passion, had vaguely warned her of an impending danger, and then had failed to keep tryst with her, one evening, and had mysteriously disappeared. Then unhappy Adeline dreamed about a prisoner, a dying man, a coffin, a voice from the coffin, and the appearance within it of the dying man, amidst torrents of blood. The chamber in which she saw these visions was most vividly represented. Next day the Marquis came to dinner, and, *though reluctantly*, consented to pass the night: Adeline, therefore, was put in a new bedroom. Disturbed by the wind shaking the mouldering tapestry, she found a concealed door behind the arras and a suite of rooms, *one of which was the chamber of her dream!* On the floor lay a rusty dagger! The bedstead, being touched, crumbled, and disclosed a small roll of manuscripts. They were not washing bills, like those discovered by Catherine Morland in 'Northanger Abbey.' Returning to her own chamber, Adeline heard the Marquis professing to La Motte a passion for herself. Conceive her horror! Silence then reigned, till all was sudden noise and confusion; the Marquis flying in terror from his room, and insisting on instant departure. His emotion was powerfully displayed.

What had occurred? Mrs. Radcliffe does not say, but horror, whether caused by a conscience ill at ease, or by events of a terrific and supernatural kind, is plainly indicated. In daylight, the Marquis audaciously pressed his unholy suit, and even offered marriage, a hollow mockery, for he was well known to be already a married man. The scenes of Adeline's flight, capture, retention in an elegant villa of the licentious noble, renewed flight, rescue by Theodore, with Theodore's arrest, and wounding of the tyrannical Marquis, are all of breathless interest. Mrs. Radcliffe

excels in narratives of romantic escapes, a topic always thrilling when well handled. Adeline herself is carried back to the Abbey, but La Motte, who had rather not be a villain if he could avoid it, enables her again to secure her freedom. He is clearly in the power of the Marquis, and his life has been unscrupulous, but he retains traces of better things. Adeline is now secretly conveyed to a peaceful valley in Savoy, the home of the honest Peter, who accompanies her. Here she learns to know and value the family of La Luc, the kindred of her Theodore (by a romantic coincidence), and, in the adorable scenery of Savoy, she throws many a ballad to the Moon.

La Motte, on the discovery of Adeline's flight, was cast into prison by the revengeful Marquis, for, in fact, soon after settling in the Abbey, it had occurred to La Motte to commence highwayman. His very first victim had been the Marquis, and, during his mysterious retreats to a tomb in a glade in the forest, he had, in short, been contemplating his booty, jewels which he could not convert into ready money. Consequently, when the Marquis first entered the Abbey, La Motte had every reason for alarm, and only pacified the vindictive aristocrat by yielding to his cruel schemes against the virtue of Adeline.

Happily for La Motte, a witness appeared at his trial, who cast a lurid light on the character of the Marquis. That villain, to be plain, had murdered his elder brother (the skeleton of the Abbey), and had been anxious to murder, it was added, his own natural daughter—that is Adeline! His hired felons, however, placed her in a convent, and, later (rather than kill her, on which the Marquis insisted), simply thrust her into the hands of La Motte, who happened to pass by that way, as we saw in the opening of this romance. Thus, in making love to Adeline, the Marquis was, unconsciously, in an awkward position. On further examination of evidence, however, things proved otherwise. Adeline was *not* the natural daughter of the Marquis, but his niece, the legitimate daughter and heiress of his brother (the skeleton of the Abbey). The MSS. found by Adeline in the room of the rusty dagger added documentary evidence, for it was a narrative of the sufferings of her father (later the skeleton), written by him in the Abbey where he was imprisoned and stabbed, and where his bones were discovered by La Motte. The hasty nocturnal flight of the Marquis from the Abbey is thus accounted for: he had probably been the victim of a terrific

hallucination; whether veridical or merely subjective, Mrs. Radcliffe does not decide. Rather than face the outraged justice of his country, the Marquis, after these revelations, took poison. La Motte was banished; and Adeline, now mistress of the Abbey, removed the paternal skeleton to 'the vault of his ancestors.' Theodore and Adeline were united, and virtuously resided in a villa on the beautiful banks of the Lake of Geneva.

Such is the 'Romance of the Forest,' a fiction in which character is subordinate to plot and incident. There is an attempt at character-drawing in La Motte, and in his wife; the hero and heroine are not distinguishable from Julia and Hippolitus. But Mrs. Radcliffe does not aim at psychological niceties, and we must not blame her for withholding what it was no part of her purpose to give. 'The Romance of the Forest' was, so far, infinitely the most thrilling of modern English works of fiction. 'Every reader felt the force,' says Scott, 'from the sage in his study, to the family group in middle life,' and nobody felt it more than a young gentleman of nineteen, who, when asked 'how his time was employed,' answered, 'I read no Civil Law.' He did read Mrs. Radcliffe, and, in 'The Betrothed,' followed her example in the story of the haunted chamber where the heroine faces the spectre attached to her ancient family.

'The Mysteries of Udolpho,' Mrs. Radcliffe's next and most celebrated work, is not (in the judgment of this reader, at least) her masterpiece. The booksellers paid her what Scott, erroneously, calls 'the unprecedented sum of 500*l.*' for the romance, and they must have made a profitable bargain. 'The public,' says Scott, 'rushed upon it with all the eagerness of curiosity, and rose from it with unsated appetite.' I arise with a thoroughly sated appetite from 'The Mysteries of Udolpho.' The book, as Sir Walter saw, is 'The Romance of the Forest' raised to a higher power. We have a similar and similarly situated heroine, cruelly detached from her young man, and immured in a howling wilderness of a brigand castle in the Apennines. In place of the Marquis is a miscreant on a larger and more ferocious scale. The usual mysteries of voices, lights, secret passages, and innumerable doors are provided regardless of economy. The great question, which I shall not answer, is, *what did the Black Veil conceal?* Not 'the bones of Laurentina,' as Catherine Morland supposed.

Here is Emily's adventure with the veil. 'She paused again, and then, with a timid hand, lifted the veil; but instantly let it

fall—perceiving that what it had concealed was no picture, and before she could leave the chamber she dropped senseless on the floor. When she recovered her recollection, . . . horror occupied her mind.’ Countless mysteries coagulate around this veil, and the reader is apt to be disappointed when the awful curtain is withdrawn. But he has enjoyed, for several hundred pages, the pleasures of anticipation. A pedantic censor may remark that, while the date of the story is 1580, all the virtuous people live in an idyllic fashion, like creatures of Rousseau, existing solely for landscape and the affections, writing poetry on Nature, animate and inanimate, including the common Bat, and drawing in water colours. In those elegant avocations began, and in these, after an interval of adventures ‘amazing horrid,’ concluded the career of Emily.

Mrs. Radcliffe keeps the many entangled threads of her complex web well in hand, and incidents which puzzle you at the beginning fall naturally into place before the end. The character of the heroine’s silly, vain, unkind, and unreasonable aunt is vividly designed (that Emily should mistake the corse of a moustached bandit for that of her aunt is an incident hard to defend). Valancourt is not an ordinary spotless hero, but sows his wild oats, and reaps the usual harvest; and Annette is a good sample of the usual *soubrette*. When one has said that the landscapes and bandits of this romance are worthy of Poussin and Salvator Rosa, from whom they were probably translated into words, not much remains to be added. Sir Walter, after repeated perusals, considered ‘Udolpho’ ‘a step beyond Mrs. Radcliffe’s former work, high as that had justly advanced her.’ But he admits that ‘persons of no mean judgment’ preferred the ‘Romance of the Forest.’ With these persons I would be ranked. The ingenuity and originality of the ‘Romance’ are greater: our friend the skeleton is better than that Thing which was behind the Black Veil, the escapes of Adeline are more thrilling than the escape of Emily, and the ‘Romance’ is not nearly so long, not nearly so prolix as ‘Udolpho.’

The roof and crown of Mrs. Radcliffe’s work is ‘The Italian’ (1797), for which she received 800*l*.¹ The scene is Naples, the date about 1764; the topic is the thwarted loves of Vivaldi and

¹ I like to know what the author got, and wish that Sir Walter Besant would publish historical statistics.

Ellena; the villain is the admirable Schedoni, the prototype of Byron's lurid characters.

'The Italian' is an excellent novel. The Prelude, 'the dark and vaulted gateway,' is not unworthy of Hawthorne, who, I suspect, had studied Mrs. Radcliffe. The theme is more like a theme of this world than usual. The parents of a young noble might well try to prevent him from marrying an unknown and penniless girl. The Marchese Vivaldi only adopts the ordinary paternal measures; the Marchesa, and her confessor, the dark-souled Schedoni, go farther—as far as assassination. The casuistry by which Schedoni brings the lady to this pass, while representing *her* as the originator of the scheme, is really subtle, and the scenes between the pair show an extraordinary advance on Mrs. Radcliffe's earlier art. The mysterious Monk who counterworks Schedoni remains an unsolved mystery to me, but of that I do not complain. He is as good as the Dweller in the Catacombs who haunts Miriam in Hawthorne's 'Marble Faun.' The Inquisition, its cells, and its tribunals are coloured

as when some great painter dips
His pencil in the gloom of thunder and eclipse.

The comic valet, Paulo, who insists on being locked up in the dungeons of the Inquisition merely because his master is there, reminds one of Samuel Weller, a Neapolitan Samivel. The escapes are Mrs. Radcliffe's most exciting escapes, and to say that is to say a good deal. Poetry is not written, or not often, by the heroine. The scene in which Schedoni has his dagger raised to murder Ellena, when he discovers that she is his daughter, 'is of a new, grand, and powerful character' (Scott), while it is even more satisfactory to learn later that Ellena was *not* Schedoni's daughter after all.

Why Mrs. Radcliffe, having reached such a pitch of success, never again published a novel, remains more mysterious than any of her Mysteries. Scott justly remarks that her censors attacked her 'by showing that she does not possess the excellences proper to a style of composition totally different from that which she has attempted.' This is the usual way of reviewers. Tales that fascinated Scott, Fox, and Sheridan, 'which possess charms for the learned and unlearned, the grave and gay, the gentleman and clown,' do not deserve to be dismissed with a sneer by people who have never read them. Following Horace Walpole in some

degree, Mrs. Radcliffe paved the way for Scott, Byron, Maturin, Lewis, and Charlotte Brontë, just as Miss Burney filled the gap between Smollett and Miss Austen. Mrs. Radcliffe, in short, kept the Lamp of Romance burning much more steadily than the lamps which, in her novels, are always blown out, in the moment of excited apprehension, by the night wind walking in the dank corridors of haunted abbeys. But mark the cruelty of an intellectual parent! Horace Walpole was Mrs. Radcliffe's father in the spirit. Yet, on September 4, 1794, he wrote to Lady Ossory: 'I have read some of the descriptive verbose tales, of which your Ladyship says I was the patriarch by several mothers' (Miss Reeve and Mrs. Radcliffe?). 'All I can say for myself is that I do not think my concubines have produced issue more natural for excluding the aid of anything marvellous.'

JASPER TOWNSHEND'S PICANINNY.

A DETAIL OF AUSTRALIAN CONQUEST.

IN the sixties, two men called Burke and Wills lay down and died in the Queensland Never-never country for want of a few pounds of food; and a few tons of bronze and granite were set up in Melbourne to their memory. In the heart of barren plenty they died of hunger; for the land where they left their bones—in those days geographers called it a 'Great Stony Desert' in the maps—was knee-deep with the finest native pasture in the world. The bookkeeper who writes the roll of Fame thus squared accounts in his extra-terrestrial inscrutable way; he gave them posthumous celebrity; and to some of those who peopled the grassy province they had helped to open to the world, and who threw where Burke and Wills had perished, gave he Fortune.

In the early days of settlement, some few tasted a freshness of living out there, such as, it is written, was in the lives of men before the world grew old; they lived there, and left, young enough to keep for ever sweet the memory of—what to most men is a tale of bitterness—their pioneering. Jasper Townshend was, and still is, one of these. He went thither in a golden moment; the single stain that lies upon his recollection of those days is linked with his tenderest memory.

It is a great day in a squatter's life when he first rides, upon his own cattle-run, the first horse of his own breeding that has ever carried saddle and horseman. That day had dawned and declined most gloriously on Townshend, and was near its waning as he drew rein upon the crest of a long low rise and looked about him, with a lifting of the heart, upon his squatter's kingdom in the Barcoo country, many years ago.

On every hand, clear to the sky-line—except where great gum-trees marked the winding chasm of the river-bed—the whole earth was laid as if in cloth of golden green as the sunlight fell aslant upon an ocean of ripe pasturage. Out and out over the great expanse the eye was drawn until the whole appeared immeasurable; and yet Townshend, from where he sat, did not look upon a tithe of his dominions. Knee-deep in rich grass

cattle were drawing in to water in slow processions ; the further files showed in the vast prospect merely as gay-coloured moving specks. Down in the echoing channel of the river the notes of a bell-bird struck upon the great silence like a call to prayer. The colt, Norseman, first of the Oontoona station-breds—and surely, from the lines and looks of him, the leader of a noble race that was to rise in this squatter's paradise—paused in the track and whinnied towards the homestead. There it was, a mile away ; the bridle road went trailing down to it, dwindling to a thread as it neared the squat brown buildings and the stockyards, all of them rough-hewn and hard won by axe and saw from virgin timber ; yet all looking now, in the spacious distance, like children's playthings. A column of blue wood-smoke climbed from the kitchen chimney and poised above it, a filmy cloud in the dead still air. There came to Townshend's ears a tiny clash of bells, and—infinitely remote, yet as if within the passage of his ear—he heard the eager barking of a dog ; the milkers were being yarded. Utter peacefulness was abroad ; and yet the horseman shrugged discontentedly. He brought his heels on the colt's ribs with a thud, and the animal went down the long slope at a swinging canter—one would say the rider's happy notions had been dashed with sourness by the coming within sound and sight of home.

As he rode now he faced the south-west ; there, between the gold of earth and blue of heaven, the horizon was belted in by a strip of denser blue, where a line of ridges lay, marking one boundary of Oontoona. Above the distant ranges now, the clear heaven was flawed by a smoke-pillar—for it could be no water-born cloud that stood thus, clean-cut and stone-grey, in such a stainless air. And even before the strange thing was hidden from Townshend by his descent, the column suddenly crumbled downward on its base, then spread and lay like a pall above the hills. Townshend pulled the colt to a walk.

'Blacks ?' he said ; '*is* it blacks at last ?' Then he braced himself strongly up. 'Let 'em come ; we want a rousing here : ' and he laughed, somewhat bitterly.

But he closed his teeth upon the laughter, and bit something like a sob ; he was near the house, and on the verandah was a woman, sewing busily. She did not look up ; Townshend went to unsaddle and turn loose the colt ; as he did so he said many times below his breath—with varied intonations, as if the word

were fraught with many meanings, most of them sinister—'Blacks?' Then he went to his wife.

She offered him no welcome; she rose, fastened the needle in her work, and threw it and her thimble hurriedly into the chair. She rubbed her palms together slowly and looked at her husband. 'Are you tired? Won't you go and wash? Supper's ready,' she said. Voice and manner were perfectly indifferent.

Her face was not so; there were two little upright lines between the eyebrows and two more running slantwise from the corners of the mouth; these, and a hardness in the eyes, told plainly enough of a woman whose nature was being soured at its very source—or frozen, or dried up. There was a sickness of the soul upon her that looked out from her eyes and held the man aloof. Upon his last utterance of the strange word he had hurried round to her anxiously, and had come upon the verandah as if he would run and take her in his arms; as he saw her face, his hands fell down and his steps lagged. They shared their supper in silence, or spoke lifelessly.

When he brought a wife from old green England out into this unfurrowed land, Townshend had thought that his three years' delving had made the place inhabitable, so that even an English-woman of finer blood might come to it and not be broken in heart and spirit by the rudeness of the change. He had seen too many women broken that way; and he worked with a tigerish energy, and planned, built, and waited until he had a weather-proof house, and neighbours within ride, a trustworthy cook and—since the seasons had been glorious and his cattle increased like magic—prospects that royalty might envy. He wrote to her, and she came. She found tokens of his thought of her at every turn; they were a sound sweet-blooded pair; they were very happy on Oontoona for many months.

Townshend's life was full to the brim; his wife's—once her new conditions were familiar to her—was not. She had all the healthy woman's horror of sitting idle-handed; when, after six months or so of bush-life, she found herself often moved to stare idly across the changeless and featureless out-of-doors, while flat despondency or an almost savage restlessness possessed her in turn, she was afraid. Loyalty bade her hide the fear; it was easy to hide, at first, from a man who, the very self of ingenuousness, was much away and often very tired. Being hidden, it became harmful, and flourished in the silence; and thus a shadow fell

between the pair. Before the blunter perceptions of the man had felt it, it was irremovable by any arts of his. A couple blessed with cruder sensibilities than these might have kept whole the bond of sympathy even by quarrelling and reconciliations; their fineness denied them that. Solitude, and monotony, and yearnings unfulfilled for things of home, had touched the woman's soul, and it was drying up within her; and the soul touched the body with deep-rooted sickness; often she would start out of horrid dreams into a racking clearness of perception and, hearing her husband breathing at her side, would feel a very horror of repulsion at thought of the touch of his limbs; and could neither weep nor wake the man and tell him. Dumbly her eyes told him such things sometimes, and dumbly he acknowledged them, and was miserably helpless.

She had come to Oontoona as a broad-browed, deep-bosomed girl, born for motherhood or—failing that—for misery. When Townshend saw the smoke-pillar above the hills, she had been two years on Oontoona; she was childless still, and growing almost gaunt in body. It was a bundle of tiny garments that she rolled up hastily and threw into her chair when he came home that day; of late he had often found her thus occupied; but in the almost angry eagerness with which she worked, and in the forbidding silence she maintained as she rose up from it, there was only hopelessness. It was as the action of a prisoner plucking at the prison-bars.

That night he was alone on the verandah: having smoked savagely to the bitter heel of his tobacco, he was biting morosely on the pipe-stem; the wife was sewing, sewing in the lamplight within; she bit off her threads with the little vicious, worrying wrench that tells in women of white-hot nerves. The first angry word had passed between them; it was his, flung behind him as he came out—flung at her stony irresponsiveness when he had told her of his day and of his pride in the first Oontoona colt—and had met with the cruellest rejoinder, that of silence.

She heard him rise suddenly and stride away, and she listened with a strange, startled look and with both hands raised to thread her needle. Out in the darkness Townshend's heart was pounding at his ribs; for he heard a far-away splashing and trampling of many horses at the river-crossing where the bridge track led westward, away out to some big cattle-runs that marked then the very outposts of settlement. Now the sound of many horses on a track

where, ordinarily, only the mailman or a solitary stockman rode, was a thing to wonder at. The stir of unsaddling and the clink of hobble-chains came up to Townshend's ears, and he saw the flicker of a camp-fire strike up and broaden; the strong sound of a cantering mounted horse grew towards him, and a man's voice, fresh and clear, hailed from the darkness—

'Oontoona homestead, ahoy?'

'Right you are,' Townshend called back, invigorated—the sound of that unknown voice was as wine to him—'and I'm delighted to see you, whoever you are; I'm Townshend, of this place of the many o's.'

The horseman towered above Townshend now against the stars. 'Owes?' the rider repeated joyously, 'sounds like bills and mortgages. I beg your pardon. I'm Brown, of the—ah—Blacks.' He dismounted.

'Not the dashing white trooper of——'

'Of the dashed black troop. The same.'

'But,' Townshend stammered, 'that voice, these bad jokes—Brown of nigger-hunting fame I've heard of—isn't it? My sainted aunt Jemima—Crackey Brown of——'

'My aunt, though; this budding squatter prince ain't old Jep Townshend?'

Mrs. Townshend came to the door to find the two men—lost to one another since their school-days—shaking hands and laughing idiotically in one another's face.

'Barbara,' said Townshend, choking in his joy, and laying his hand upon her shoulder, 'here's old Crackey Brown; he blackened my right eye, God bless him, fifteen years ago.'

'Mr. Crackey Brown is very welcome all the same,' she said; and Townshend hustled him into the lighted room.

He was the very pattern of a soldier, clear-eyed, clean-run, as fair as flax, tanned and splendidly healthy, with fearless, straight-looking blue eyes. His scarlet-edged uniform of rough serge, of the Native Police, showed up a figure lithe as a greyhound's; from his narrow shapely head to his spurred heel, every line and turn proclaimed the fighting Englishman.

The mere sound and sight of him sweetened the homestead instantly. As they hustled about to get him supper and a bed, Townshend, with an armful of blankets, met his wife, with a loaded tray, on the gangway that led from house to kitchen. They pulled up short, and in the semi-darkness the eyes of each sent and

accepted messages of repentance and reconciliation to the other. She held her tray aside and suddenly leaned against him, standing on tiptoe and holding up her face. As he kissed her she made the little murmur of contentment that he knew, but had not heard for many a day.

The three sat till it was very late and talked of England. Brown, though he had been tossed by the luck of roving Britons into a wild career—to command savages in making savage raids at an outpost of the Empire—was as changeless in his texture as a well-kept sword-blade. The wilderness had left no mark upon him, as it had upon the other two. Until the men were alone together the talk, inspired by Brown's look and voice, was as English as Piccadilly or the white cliffs of Dover.

Even after Barbara had left the two men were boys together for a while. Then the talk ran onward to the present: Townshend told his tale of stubborn fight to make and hold a cattle-run, and Brown praised and envied him as the man of grit and purpose, and planned a gorgeous future for Oontoona; Brown told strange tales of his fights against marauding blacks, and Townshend's blood sang war-songs in his ears. What was the squatter's life but stagnation, he asked, with all the odds against him?

'I've sunk my last shilling, Crackey; yea, I'm borrowed to the neck. A couple of bad seasons—the bank turns rusty—and—good-night. Exit Jasper T., pioneer, enter some pot-bellied speculator. Yours is the better part, Crackey. Action; life going like a cavalry charge!'

'To what, Jep? Bankruptcy, by Jingo. No, worse; the likes of me pass on generally to rot in the Civil Service; or grow a liver as police magistrate.' He rose up and stretched himself and yawned mightily. 'Yah-ha-a-action, eh? Ouch! Is it well to talk of England, home, and——' he stooped and shook Townshend by the shoulder, 'and to see beauty face to face?'

'Yes,' Townshend said quietly, 'it is well.'

Brown looked away into the darkness; the troopers' fire glowed now, sullenly, a crimson star. The men were silent for a space.

'To be sure,' Brown said briskly at last, 'yes, it's a rum trade; oh, yes, I've had great times occasionally, but now, this seven months, I suppose, I've been over-eating myself, and haven't seen the face of a warrigal nigger. It's seven months since I hunted the last lot in among the western side of the McCausland

ranges, and I can't get word of a speared beast ever since. I drifted over here because some day soon these niggers 'll leave the ranges—must be getting hungry—and most likely they'll give *you* a turn this time. If I don't see signs of 'em before long, I shall resign my commission and look for active work—pew-opening, for instance.'

The smoke pillar leapt suddenly into Townshend's memory, and he mentioned it.

Brown rattled off a fire of questions, and as Townshend's replies came short and to his liking, he jumped to his feet and softly did a war dance on the clay floor of the verandah.

'Ho!' he called, 'I smell blood. Why in thunder didn't you——?'

'Not so loud.' Townshend stole to his wife's room—she lay as if in deepest slumber—he touched her hair ever so lightly with his lips, and returned to Brown.

'It's the first sign of blacks we've had on Oontoona,' he said; 'I didn't know it meant anything particular.'

'Well, it means this: "Policemen no come up here long time," see? Oh, ho! there's sport ahead; I know it, gadzooks, by the twitching of my trigger-finger. In the south-west, you say, near about your boundary? That's the eastern side, I take it, of the broken country that rises to the McCausland ranges in the west, where they front Bindool and Daryindie and Teneriffe, and all that lot of stations on the George River watershed? Very well; I've hunted 'em all along that country till they daren't show a nose outside the ridges. Now, you bet your best cabbage-tree hat that some of 'em have worked west, and my prophetic soul urged me along the very day they've turned up on your side. You'll soon find their trade-mark.'

Long before daylight Townshend rose. He left a note for his wife, roused the stockman, to whom he assigned business to keep him all day about the homestead; and before the stars were off the sky he and Brown were ahorse and on the road with six uniformed black troopers behind them. Each trooper had a carbine slung at his back and a cartridge-belt round him. They were full of glee, and gibbered and played pranks on one another incessantly.

'I'm generally supposed,' Brown exclaimed, 'to go alone, unknown to station-holders, and to carry out the Queen's regulations on the quiet. But with old schoolmates it's otherwise. You shall

see the Australian adaptation of the verb "to disperse," if that smoke said true and we strike a hot trail.'

By sunrise they were skirting the south-western ranges, and still all the country wore its usual aspect of unbroken peace. Then, beyond a little scrubby promontory of the hills, a kite screamed in the morning stillness, and Townshend's horse rattled in his nostrils.

'Carrion,' said Brown, as he sat up and sniffed the air. They cantered forward.

Beyond the foot-hill, where a little sandy creek ran out of the ridges, there were three trodden, bloody patches in the grass; and on each were fresh-torn fragments of hide, bones with the flesh ripped from them, the scattered entrails and grinning head of a mutilated beast. Round each were broken spears. In the soft creek-sand was a crowd of human tracks of all sizes—prints of broad naked feet, with spreading toes.

The black troopers dismounted, and swarmed about the offal like hounds loosed on a trail. Townshend stood alone, and leaned his forehead against the horse's neck. He thought of his quiet well-kept cattle—his pride and only wealth—tearing over the country in a panic; of all his patient work undone, and there was murder in his heart.

Brown stayed with the troopers till they had made their report to him. Then he came to Townshend with a broken spear-butt in his hand. 'Got 'em,' he said, and tapped the notched end of the spear; 'here's the Western trade-mark; they haven't seen our tracks; think we troopers are away the other side of sundown. Settle the business before dark. Will you go or stay? I shall let loose'—he jerked his thumb behind him; the troopers were waiting and watching hungrily for the word to mount—'the dogs. It won't be pretty.'

Brown's blue eyes were stone-hard, wide, and set; in the hands of this man, vengeance would be driven home; but Townshend felt no touch of pity as he looked about him at the wantonness, and abroad, where panic must be spreading like a plague among his herd. 'I'll come,' he said, and mounted. Brown gave the word; the blue-shirted troopers spread away into the scrub, bending in their saddles, tacking across and across with a ferocious intentness to pick up the trail. The white men rode behind.

The tracks were plain reading in the loose soil of the foot-

hills; on the stony rises the troopers went afoot, still following the line of march by signs invisible to the whites. By noon they found where the cattle-killers had camped the night before, on a ridge above a solitary little rocky pool. There was damning evidence in lumps of charred and wasted meat about the ashes of the fires, and the column pushed on.

The ground became stonier, and the hills closed in about them; it grew choking hot, and though they moved among a wilderness of trees, each tree stood up lank and scant-leaved, barely flecked with shadow about its foot, so that the men toiled in broad sunshine. The ride became a crawl; the black troopers and the white one never spoke, never flagged, but tracked, and watched ahead with the nervous, tireless energy of terriers on the scent.

Townshend was left a stranger to this centredness of purpose, and misgiving touched him; abstracted, and with nameless doubts upon him of this mission of slaughter to which he had set his hand, he looked about him and ahead, at the naked hungry wilderness of sterile granite and grey sapless trees all throbbing to the cruel sun, and a fear and doubting of he knew not what possessed him. The unflinching Brown and his war-dogs had somehow become foreign to Townshend. Like a stab in the throat, a conviction seized him that something was amiss with his wife. But he kept his place doggedly, abreast of the soldierly, unpitying Brown.

At last the horses were left, tied and close-hobbled, in what seemed like a last little amphitheatre of soil, and the troop went on afoot, carrying nothing but their arms and water-bags. The trail led them into the jaws of a narrow gorge, a very chaos of granite boulders that seemed, as they lay all red and quaking in the intolerable glare, as if about to dissolve and rush down in a torrent of molten lava. Townshend's boots scorched him; the march resolved itself into an eternity of effort to climb noiselessly upward among the burning stones, and to gulp down enough scalding air to save his bursting heart.

Then he felt Brown's hand upon him, and looked up. The troop was halted; every head was lifted and aslant. Three hundred yards onward the barren ridges were cleft—it was the gully-head, and beyond the cleft, kites were wheeling and crying in the dazzling blue. As they looked and listened, a clear human sound broke out above the piping of the birds; it was a girl's

laughter, and ended in a high note of pleasure. At a sign from Brown, every trooper unslung his carbine and loaded, and each put a spare cartridge between his teeth. Then, in extended line, they crept on again like cats.

Townshend lagged, in a fury of compunction. The only sound of the enemy had come to him as a girl's laugh; yet Brown, as he turned to beckon the squatter into line, had the light of battle and a savage triumph in his sea-blue eyes. Townshend crept forward, and swore to himself no trigger should be drawn here.

No watch had been set. The blacks had passed the rocky crown, whence they must have seen their danger, and were cosily camped on a little patch of soil below. From between two tall boulders Townshend could see the whole company as if he looked from a gallery over a floor beneath. There must have been thirty little smouldering fires or white ash-heaps. Each fire apparently denoted a family party; by each was a little gunyah of boughs, and in each gunyah were the elders of the party. Many were coiled up in sleep, and many of the sleepers' heads were grey; some were tending scraps of meat among the ashes; some were chipping patiently at the manufacture of wooden things and crooning softly to themselves; some sat in idle content; round about the tree nearest to each gunyah were the weapons of that party; and hung to the tree were grimy belongings, among which in every case were rudely hacked lumps of raw meat. And among the spaces of the camp a dozen naked lithe-limbed boys darted and played like swallows. As Townshend watched, the same ripple and call of laughter he had heard before broke from a gunyah at some antic of the smallest player.

As Townshend took in the scene his hatred melted, he forgot his mission, he looked with a kindly hunger of curiosity and purely human interest. The soldier in him died; the lust for vengeance faded into mere pity. Where was the ruthless enemy that had lurked beneath that threatening smoke-pennon? Here, in the hollow of his hand, and he saw—what?

A brawny savage sat cross-legged and happy at the nearest gunyah; a woman slept beside him, and against her sat a small picaninny who gazed out solemnly at the players. In a flash, Townshend seemed to see with the man's eyes. He was full-fed; here was food for the moment and for the morrow, killed in fair hunt—what did he know of the white man that had brought the

cattle there, and was a trespasser? Here was his wife, curled in sleep beside him; he could see his big boy lusty at play; the smell of the wood-smoke was sweet; doubtless the police with their rifles were far away; the world was very well; he would doze awhile—he put out a hand and stroked the picaninny's shoulder.

Then Townshend remembered his errand, and came out of his dreaming with eyes of horror. Brown caught the look and read it for the nervousness of a man at his first killing; he sent back a flinty smile. Townshend crept to him and whispered—'Brown! for God Almighty's sake—is this your fighting?—they're helpless, man!'

'So are your cattle, old chap. Steady's the word. I know your feelings—you'll be all right when you think it over. Stand by.'

'You shall not'—Townshend jumped to his feet—'I'll——'

It was the signal to fire.

The echoes of the hills bellowed in return to a volley from the rifles, and then wailed an answer to the yell that broke up from the camp.

The blacks ran for life, empty-handed, in sheer brute terror, without a sound, leaping from stone to stone. The troopers followed, reloading as they ran.

But one old man, as he leapt to his feet, seemed to turn giddy; he clutched forward blindly with his hands, then fell across a heap of ashes and embers, and lay still; he sent up a white cloud as he fell. One of the boys was hit in full career at play; he crawled a pace or two, dragging a shattered leg, then lay down in the open, and a crimson stain spread round him.

Of the nearest group that Townshend had been watching, the man fell forward quietly on his face and hardly moved, the gin started up to run with the rest, but turned, and Townshend could see the look in her eyes as she put one hand to her side and stretched the other towards the picaninny. The child ran to her; she sank down and knelt by him; he clambered up her shoulders and sat astride her neck, clasping his hands about her forehead, ready to be lifted up and carried off. But the mother did not rise; still she sank till the picaninny was left standing. The woman crawled by inches till she could touch the dead man's head. At last she lay outstretched; the fingers of one hand were twisted in the man's hair—the other arm was curled about the picaninny sitting by her shoulder.

At the first volley Brown had run with the troopers; Townshend saw the revolver-muzzle smoking in his hand. He watched without moving till all but the picaninny lay still. The dropping shots and the shouts of the troopers gradually ceased, and Townshend was left in silence, except for a tiny wailing from the picaninny, who plucked at his mother's fingers and beat softly on her body.

Townshend drew near the child unheard; the rocks and trees swam before him; he put out a foot to save himself from falling; the picaninny heard him and ceased his crying, and looked round.

The two gazed at one another for a long moment of silence; then the child stood up and held two tiny hands, orange-coloured on the palms, above his head, in token of unarmed surrender. Townshend sat down before him, and sobbed as men sob—dry-eyed.

The two were still facing one another when Brown came in sight, unheard by either. He was filling his pipe, and called out heartily, 'Feel sick, old chap? Lots do, first go off. Be all right when you get a—hallo! now what blasted nigger shot this gin?'

Brown had noticed the picaninny's dead mother, and had not observed Townshend's silence and his aged and narrowed face. The picaninny cowered down and clung about the neck of the dead woman as Brown came towards him.

Then the officer made a tour of the deserted camp, examined the bodies as he filled and lighted his pipe, and called out to Townshend cheerful remarks on what he noticed, and broken accounts of the pursuit of the blacks down the gorge. To follow and 'disperse' niggers, all in open day, was, he exulted, a 'record.' Townshend answered nothing, but sat and gazed at the picaninny.

One by one the black troopers gathered in. They were in great glee; they came and stood or sat about Townshend and the child as a centre of interest. The picaninny cowered closer against the dead body; when a trooper came near, he glared at the man like a hunted beast; his head flattened like a snake's.

'Wake up, Jep!' said Brown, and slapped Townshend on the shoulder. 'You'll call this a fine day's work some day when you have broken the youngster in for a stockman.'

'It's paying dear for labour, Brown.'

'Rot, man! Do you remember how you felt when you found your cattle mauled, and thought of the consequences?'

'I remember.'

'There will be no more of that, then; you'll bless this day's work inside a fortnight.'

'I shall be ashamed of this day as long as I live.'

Brown flourished his pipe impatiently. 'If I didn't know your pluck, Jep, and that you were upset for a minute, I should call that croaking. That's the sort of rot, begging your pardon, that stands in the way of conquest.'

Townshend held out a hand towards the picaninny and the dead parents. He tried to repeat the word—it stuck in his throat.

The child ran to Townshend and closed his little fists round two of the fingers held out towards him. Brown swore vehemently at a trooper for laughing.

Townshend stooped down and stroked the picaninny's shoulder; it was velvety soft, and he made no resistance when the white man lifted him in his arms. When the party moved away towards the horses, the child looked back once at his mother and gave his monotonous little cry, then settled himself confidently against Townshend's shoulder. He would let no other touch him.

On the previous night Barbara Townshend had retired in a happy exhilaration. In the inspiring presence of the young police officer she freshened, glowed, expanded like a rose in sunshine. In bed she even cried a little, quietly, not at all in bitterness, or in longing for the irrevocable past that had been awakened suddenly; but in sorrow for her strange unlovingness, and with a healing sense of fortitude upon her. The tears refreshed her; they came to prove the strictured soul was stirring wholesomely again within her. Hope had revived; the future beckoned; life on Oontoona was no more to be a crushing affair that called merely for endurance. She planned, penitently, many healthful resolutions that the suffocating cloud upon her life and love—so happily dispersed—was to descend no more.

Then, as she was drifting happily into slumber, the men's voices reached her, and her heart went cold when she heard vaguely of blood, and blacks, and cattle-spearing. But she shrank from starting upon this more hopeful chapter of her life, that was to date from this night, by showing foolish fears—she was to be a real helpmeet to her husband now—and so, when he came and stood above her and kissed her hair, she was not asleep, but fighting down the impulse to cling about his neck and tell him she was wildly, horribly afraid.

She heard no more, but lay, throttling the terror that had so suddenly replaced her new-found happiness. In the very effort to keep herself rigid in thought and limb, lest she should play the coward, she slept, and woke no more until the morning.

Jasper's note, the quietness about the homestead, and the stockman's clumsy and mysterious manner, began a strange day for Barbara. The muteness that had lain so long upon her had broken up; she was full of longings and wild fears, and insupportable restlessness. The empty vastness out of doors drove her within; she was no sooner in the house than she could have screamed out in terror; for her fear persuaded her that, through the long grass and ambushed in the river-bed, pitiless, uncouthly weaponed savages were closing in upon the homestead. And so, round and about, her nameless terrors hunted her.

It was high noon; she had eaten nothing, and was bending distractedly above the poor little bundle of sewing, listening abroad; full of sympathy for the dumb Barbara of yesterday, who had engaged in such pitiful futility; and yet wringing a sweet prophecy from it too, and fingering the baby-clothes longingly—when she heard a distant rushing in the grass, and many great moanings, and felt the earth tremble.

When the stockman came and called her, he found no trembling, frightened girl, but a woman, steady and serene, armed with her husband's rifle; the thimble was on one of the fingers that were round the rifle-stock as she stood as if on guard, above the dainty litter of her sewing.

She came with him to the stockyard, and even helped him to put up the rails upon fifty terrified cattle that were surging and huddling there—panting, foaming, hollow-flanked, and terror-driven, like the wing of a routed army. Several beasts had smears of blood upon their ribs; and in one corner a young cow had fallen. Her eyes were glazing in death; six inches of a jagged broken spear protruded from her ribs, and her calf stood off and bellowed frantically to her. Barbara—large-eyed and very white, but very firm—looked on while the stockman ended the brute's agony with a knife-thrust in her neck.

Darkness had fallen before Townshend drew near the homestead; the troopers stopped by their camp at the river; the squatter and police officer rode on to the house. The night was still and serene, and in the east a young moon swung low and

shone a sulky red-gold. Townshend was tired to the heart and his bones ached, but the picaninny was sleeping quietly on his arm. He was dully, strangely ill at ease.

There was no light showing, and the stockman was posted by the track, fifty yards from the house. Townshend pulled up and flung a question at him.

The man showed an untidy outline. His thumbs were in his belt; his face glowed crimson and faded thrice above his pipe-bowl, and he sent three clouds of smoke out and upward in the stagnant air before he spoke. The face looked wildly puzzled. 'She's—the Missis is——'

'Speak, you blazing idiot! Dead? Say it!'

'No—queer. That's what she is. It was like this—I took away the gun,' he called after Townshend.

A grey figure was standing perfectly still in the doorway. Townshend dismounted softly, still with the sleeping child on his right arm. 'Barbara,' he said quietly. 'Barbara.'

'Who is it?' a strange voice answered him. 'Something's pinned quite tight round my head.'

He put his hand upon her forehead, then round her neck, and drew her towards him. 'Come, Barbara, it's Jasper, you know. And it's all right.'

She came to him, and he saw her in the dimness, looking for an instant wild and strange. Then, as though in the depths of her something had loosened, broken, and melted, he saw the Barbara he had known aforetime. She clung to him, sobbing and crying passionately.

Presently, the first intensity of her sobbing past, and though her face was still hidden against his neck, her hands began to wander over him, pressing him fondly here and there. In doing so she touched the little naked body of the picaninny. She raised herself up with a strange wild cry.

He tried to hold it from her, to explain; but she would hear nothing, and followed him, holding out both hands and staring hungrily at the child. 'A child—give it me, quick! Give it me, Jasper!'

'Barbara,' he said blunderingly—'it's black—and motherless. We mustn't hurt——'

'Hurt? Motherless? Oh, you——. Give me the child.'

She stamped her foot.

There was something imperious in the demand; he handed

her the sleeping creature. She clutched it fiercely, and seemed to crush it to her breast; yet it was taken and held with such unerring gentleness, that the picaninny merely opened two large sleepy eyes, and closed them again. Then he snuggled against her neck and went to sleep again.

Barbara laughed and sobbed at once for joy. She rubbed her cheek on the picaninny's shoulder; she took one of the fat little arms and pressed it round her neck; she nibbled at the child here and there with her lips. And all the time she swung herself from foot to foot with a cradling, motherly movement.

Brown, who had withdrawn, came back; the two men stood together in amazement. She looked up at them presently, and laughed a deep-chested happy laugh, and fled, hugging the picaninny to her.

The two men stood alone for a while, saying nothing. By-and-by they stole guiltily within; Townshend lit the lamp and they foraged, still exchanging scarcely a word, for something to eat.

An hour later Townshend crept quietly back from his wife's room.

'They're asleep,' he whispered, 'dead asleep, cuddled up together, black and white. It's been a strange day, Crackey. Let's go out and smoke.'

They went forth. The illimitable downs were white beneath the moon. The two men lay in the grass and watched the smoke-clouds poise and vanish in the dewless, windless night. But they found little to say to one another.

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That was the first and last 'dispersal' of the blacks on Townshend's cattle-run. The picaninny lived to be a stockrider there; and within a year of the picaninny's coming, a child was born at the Oontoona homestead.

HERBERT C. MACILWAINE.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN POLICY OF
SIR BARTLE FRERE.

'Unless my countrymen are much changed, they will some day do me justice. I shall not leave a name to be permanently dishonoured.'—Frere to Sir M. Hicks-Beach, Sept. 22, 1879.

IN estimating a policy there are two questions which may be asked—Was it wise? and, Was it successful? When the author of the policy is himself responsible for its execution the two questions are generally merged, as in the case of the absolute ruler. But the trend of modern politics has made such a position more and more rare. Constitutional monarchs and servants of the Crown are dependent upon the will of the nation, and, in spite of the relative consistency secured by party discipline, the clearest mandate of the people may be suddenly and arbitrarily withdrawn. In the policy of a modern statesman, therefore, a valid distinction may be made between just conception and successful execution. In these cases, where a policy is wise but not successful, it is the duty of the historian to trace the causes of failure to their true sources, and where injustice has been done by contemporary opinion to formulate a judgment which posterity can accept.

In the case of the late Sir Bartle Frere it is essential that this distinction should be borne in mind. His policy cannot be called successful, since it was arrested, and he himself was first censured and then recalled by the Home Government. Had it been put into effect, there would have been no Majuba, no Bechuanaland Expedition, no Jameson Raid, and no war to-day. Each and all of these events show that the principles upon which that policy was based were sound and necessary. Yet in the play of party politics both these principles, and the actual measures by which he strove to give effect to them, have been so grossly misrepresented that the most shameless misstatements of perfectly ascertained facts have been made in public and allowed to pass unchallenged. So long as the conditions of South Africa were imperfectly understood, and its history was practically a sealed book, these audacious calumniators—whose precept was *de mortuis nil nisi malum*—could escape with impunity. But to-day, when

the mind of England and the Empire is concentrated upon South Africa, it is possible to win attention for a statement of the facts of which these politicians apparently presumed the public would for ever remain in ignorance. In short, the time has arrived for history to revise the verdict of contemporary opinion, and, by restoring the reputation of Sir Bartle Frere, to make the only reparation possible for an act of injustice which is unparalleled¹ in the later history of the Empire. To present the first data for such a reconsideration is the object which I have had in view in writing this brief account for the pages of the CORNHILL.

Fortunately the materials for the reconsideration are in every sense complete. Not only are the published despatches and official communications singularly full and explicit, but the whole of the voluminous correspondence which passed between Frere and every person, great or small, with whom he was brought into relationship during his administration has been carefully preserved and arranged by the loving solicitude of his family. The existence of this material suggests a question which needs a word of explanation. How was it that so strange a misconception was originally formed, and that misstatements so grossly inconsistent with the facts were allowed to obtain this wide currency? The answer is a simple one. Frere was bitterly attacked by one great party and virtually betrayed by the other; the re-establishment of his reputation was therefore equally damaging to the party interests of both Conservatives and Liberals. And before South Africa had ceased to be a hideous nightmare from the thought of which the nation instinctively recoiled, and he himself a scapegoat for the sins of our party leaders, his voice was silenced by the grave. At the actual moment of the betrayal, when the country was mad with the sting of Isandhlwana, some of the noblest voices of his generation were raised in his defence; but when the betrayal was completed these voices grew silent before the stolid indifference to South African affairs by which the nation strove to veil the shame of Majuba.

The first necessity, therefore, is to brush away the cobwebs.

The most gross of all the false statements which have obtained currency in this manner is the statement that Frere annexed the

¹ I have not forgotten Gordon. But the nation was never ungrateful for Gordon's sacrifice. Moreover, Gordon was allowed to die at his post: Frere was haled back to England as one unworthy of the trust which had been placed in him.

Transvaal. Mr. John Morley repeated it in his speech at Arbroath on September 5 of last year. He was at once, and very properly, called to account by the present Sir Bartle Frere; but it took three successive letters ¹ to wring from him a specific acknowledgment of his error, and the other day my eye fell upon it again in the columns of a paper which claims to be written by specialists. False as the statement is, it would appear to be still current, and it cannot therefore be passed over in silence. I will give the facts with as little comment as possible, and leave the reader to decide for himself what conceivable cause could justify an ex-Cabinet Minister in making such a statement on a matter of historical fact, when that fact was also a matter of party importance at the moment of speaking.

The Transvaal was annexed by Sir Theophilus Shepstone under instructions from Lord Carnarvon. Shepstone had come to England to represent the Natal Government at the Confederation Conference held in London in August, 1876. The commission, in which these instructions were embodied, was dated October 5, 1876. The annexation proclamation was issued by him at Pretoria on April 12, 1877.

The date of Lord Carnarvon's letter requesting Frere to take the Governorship of the Cape was October 13, 1876; *i.e.* it was written a week after the date of Shepstone's commission. The proposal contained in this letter came as a complete surprise to Frere, who only accepted the post on account of the special importance which attached to it at this time.² Frere did not reach the Cape until March 31, 1877, and Sir Henry Barkly (his predecessor) left a few days later. The bare announcement of the issue of the proclamation at Pretoria first came to him through a press telegram on April 16, and an official copy of the proclamation did not reach him till April 30. It must be remembered that the South Africa of 1877 was very different from the South Africa of 1899. When Frere landed at the Cape, the main trunk line which now connects Capetown with Johannesburg and Buluwayo—this latter being 1,350 miles distant—ran only as far as Worcester, a little town about a hundred miles by rail from the capital, while the telegraph, which is to-day on the point of running uninterruptedly

¹ Published in the *Times* of September 30, 1899.

² To undertake the government of the Cape, 'nominally as Governor, but really as the statesman . . . most capable of carrying my scheme of confederation into effect . . .,' and afterwards 'as the first Governor-General of the South African Dominion,'—*Lord Carnarvon's Letter*.

from Capetown to Cairo, had been carried northward as far only as Kimberley. The account which Frere gives of his relationship to the annexation is this:

In judging of the annexation of the Transvaal, I would wish it to be borne in mind that *it was an act which in no way originated with me, over which I had no control, and with which I was only subsequently incidentally connected.* The annexation took place on the 11th of April, several days before my arrival at the Cape on the 31st March could be known to Sir Theophilus Shepstone, as the telegraph line did not then exist, and letters took over three weeks from Cape Town to Pretoria. . . .

It was a great question then, as now, whether the annexation was justifiable.¹

The letters which Frere wrote immediately after he had received the intelligence make it quite plain that he saw at once that the annexation would affect the South African situation in more ways than one. He realised in particular that it would increase the reluctance of the Cape Ministry to co-operate in Lord Carnarvon's scheme of federation—a reluctance already sufficiently marked in the abstinence of Mr. Molteno (the premier) from the London Conference of the preceding year—since the news was received with very mingled feelings by the Dutch majority upon whom this Ministry depended for support. But, feeling that it was too late to ask now whether the act was premature or not, he loyally accepted the *fait accompli*, and prepared at once to deal with the problem of political reconstruction as thus modified.

So much for the annexation myth.

A second misrepresentation is the statement that Frere was the author of the Zulu war. Thanks to the rudimentary knowledge of the conditions of South Africa which is now possessed by the English public, it is no longer necessary to refute this charge in the gross form in which it was brought by Mr. Gladstone in his Midlothian campaign. With the murderous record of Tshaka, Dingaan, and Ketshwayo in the pages of every popular manual of South African history, Mr. Gladstone's appeal for the Zulus, 'who in defence of their own land offered their naked bodies to the terribly improved artillery and arms of modern science,' would excite more smiles than tears.² It is realised

¹ These words occur over his own signature in the *Nineteenth Century* for February 1881. The italics are the writer's.

² Tshaka (grandfather of Ketshwayo) is estimated to have caused the death of a million souls, and 'turned thousands of square miles into a howling wilderness,'

that in a country with a dark-skinned population, even now four or five times as numerous as the European residents, there could be no industrial or political development until the supremacy of the white man was established. In the first place, the Europeans could not live in safety by the side of barbarous neighbours whose sole occupation in life was the art and practice of war, and, in the second, the necessary task of educating the Bantu population for the partnership with the colonists, which their continued presence in South Africa demanded, could not be accomplished until European control had been established over them. It is unnecessary, therefore, to prove that a native chief who had turned the adult males of his whole tribe into a manslaying machine, and aspired to raise the Bantu in a war of extermination against the Europeans, was an element of danger which held the industrial and political development of European South Africa in suspense. In short, at the epoch in which Frere was sent out to the Cape the point had been reached at which either the military Bantu, as represented by Sekukuni in the Transvaal, Krelî, Sandilli, and other chiefs between the eastern border of the Cape Colony and Natal, and Ketshwayo in Zululand,¹ or else the European colonists, Dutch and British, had to go. There was, of course, no doubt as to the ultimate issue of the conflict. The only question was whether the supremacy of the European was to be established by a series of native wars such as had stained the record of British rule in South Africa from the beginning of the century, or by one

between the years 1812-28. Dingaan (son of Tshaka and uncle of Ketshwayo) treacherously murdered Pieter Retief and his party in cold blood, and massacred the Boer emigrants on the Blue Krantz River (1838). Ketshwayo, when remonstrated with on the murder of Zulu girls, replied to the Governor of Natal: 'I do kill, but do not consider yet I have done anything in the way of killing. Why do the white people start at nothing? I have not yet begun. I have yet to kill; it is the custom of our nation, and I shall not depart from it. . . . My people will not listen unless they are killed; and, while wishing to be friends with the English, I do not agree to give over my people to laws sent by them. Have I not asked the English Government to allow me to wash my spears, since the death of my father Umpani, and they have kept playing with me all this time and treating me like a child? Go back and tell the English that I shall now act on my own account. . . .' This was in 1876, and the communication is of course to be found in the Blue Books.

¹ All of these chiefs, and others not mentioned here, took up arms against one or other of the various European Governments during the five years preceding the Zulu war.

decisive struggle the result of which would be recognised as final.¹

While few, however, would have the hardihood to repeat the charge in its original Midlothian form, Frere is still represented in certain quarters as being responsible for an unnecessary war, and by implication for the disaster of Isandhlwana. I take the charge in the form in which it was made by Mr. Bryce in my own hearing. In dissenting from the view which I had myself previously expressed,² Mr. Bryce then said: 'In my view Sir Bartle Frere committed two grave errors—he precipitated a war with the Zulus, which might have been avoided; and, secondly, he sent to govern the Transvaal Sir Owen Lanyon, an officer unfitted by training and character for so difficult and delicate a task.' This second charge, which is important because it involves an absolutely false representation of the character of the measures which Frere recommended for the settlement of the Transvaal after the annexation (besides containing a direct error of fact), will be considered separately. Frere, according to Mr. Bryce, 'precipitated' the Zulu war, and that was a war which might have been avoided. As Mr. Bryce is making practically the same charge as that upon which Frere was censured by the Beaconsfield Cabinet, it will be convenient to place the words used by Sir Michael Hicks-Beach before the reader:

Her Majesty's Government . . . cannot but think that the forces at your disposal were adequate to protect Natal from any serious Zulu inroad, and to provide for any other emergency that could have arisen during the interval necessary for consulting her Majesty's Government upon the terms that Ketschwayo should be called upon to accept; and they have been unable to find in the documents you have placed before them that evidence of urgent necessity for immediate action which alone could justify you in taking, without their full knowledge and sanction, a course almost certain to result in a war *which, as I had previously impressed upon you, every effort should have been used to avoid.*³

¹ Since the Zulu power and the resistance of Sekukuni, Ketschwayo's 'dog' in the Transvaal, were broken by the British troops in 1879, the supremacy of the Europeans in South Africa has not been seriously contested. The native rising in Rhodesia, in 1896, is scarcely an exception, since that rising was due primarily to the fact that the country had been denuded of the European police by the Jameson Raid. The steadiness of the natives during the present war affords remarkable evidence of the reality of the control now exercised by the European magistrates placed over them.

² On December 14, 1899, at the last of a series of six lectures given by me at the Imperial Institute. I take Mr. Bryce's words from the report in the *Times* of December 15.

³ C. 2260.

If the statement contained in this last clause (which I have italicised) can be maintained, then the Beaconsfield Cabinet in 1879, and Mr. Bryce in 1899, are right in holding that Frere forced the hand of the Home Government.

We have now reached the central issue of the controversy. And here, again, space permits me to give only the mere heads of the overwhelming evidence in favour of Frere—evidence which shows that the instructions originally given were suddenly countermanded by the Home Government, when it was impossible for him to change his course without involving South Africa in dangers infinitely more serious than the Zulu war.

In order to make this bare summary intelligible certain dates and events must be borne in mind. Lord Carnarvon, by whom Frere was appointed Governor of the Cape and High Commissioner for South Africa, became Colonial Secretary when Lord Beaconsfield's Government took office in 1874. As already mentioned, Frere reached the Cape on March 31, 1877. At the beginning of the next year, 1878, Lord Carnarvon resigned the Colonial Office owing to a difference of opinion on the question of the despatch of the fleet to the Dardanelles, and he was then succeeded by Sir Michael Hicks-Beach. The news of Lord Carnarvon's resignation was a great blow to Frere; it has 'utterly taken the heart out of me,' he wrote to him on February 17. But he received no intimation of any change of attitude in the Home Government until the autumn. The disaster of Isandhlwana occurred on January 22, 1879, and the victory of Ulundi on the succeeding July 4. Frere was censured by a despatch dated March 19 in the same year, and he was superseded by Lord Wolseley in the High Commissionership for South-East Africa in the following June; and from this time he ceased to have any control over, or responsibility for, the affairs of the Transvaal and Natal. He was informed at the time that Lord Wolseley's appointment was temporary, and that the reason of it was the necessity of uniting the supreme military and civil control over this disturbed area in the person of one man, and the despatch of censure had contained the assertion that the Government had no desire to withdraw 'the confidence hitherto reposed' in him. Frere was recalled by a telegraphic despatch of August 1, 1880, from Lord Kimberley, who had become Colonial Secretary in the preceding April, when Mr. Gladstone's Government came into power. The three and a half years of Frere's administration, therefore, fall

into two distinct periods separated by his supersession in June 1879.

The special object for which Frere was sent to the Cape was, of course, to carry through the scheme of confederation embodied in Lord Carnarvon's South Africa Act. It must suffice to say here that two special reasons made the union of the colonies and states desirable at this epoch. The industrial development of South Africa, which had now for the first time received a decided impulse from the discovery of diamonds at Kimberley in 1870, required that any occasion for further territorial disputes between the Imperial Government and the Boer States should be removed; and the employment of natives in the mines, resulting in the acquisition of firearms purchased with the wages thus earned, made the adoption of a common native policy by the various European communities a matter of vital importance. The danger due to the acquisition of firearms in considerable quantities by the natives was also increased by the simultaneous completion of the Zulu military system under Ketshwayo.

When Frere's administration commenced, the dominant military power in South Africa was the Zulu king, supported by informal alliances with other chiefs of the military tribes; and this military strength of the Bantu paralysed the progress of South Africa in 1877 in precisely the same manner as the armaments of the Boers paralysed it in 1899. The existence of the danger was perfectly well known to Lord Carnarvon; and the defeat of the Boers by Sekukuni, together with Ketshwayo's known intention¹ to invade the Transvaal, constituted the immediate ground for the annexation. Frere received a definite statement of the situation, and of what was required of him by the Government, in Lord Carnarvon's letter of October 13, 1876, in which, as we have seen, he was first asked to undertake the South African administration. In view of this charge of precipitate action it is essential to notice that the time within which the native danger was to be removed, and the work of federation was to be accomplished, was estimated by Lord Carnarvon at 'not

¹ I say 'known intention' advisedly. In reply to Shepstone's message sent on April 11, 1877, on the eve of the annexation, Ketshwayo said: 'I thank my father Somtseu (Shepstone) for his message. I am glad that he has sent it, because the Dutch have tired me out, and I intended to fight with them once, only once, and to drive them over the Vaal. Kabana, you see my impis are gathered! It was to fight the Dutch I called them together. Now I will send them back to their houses.' *C.* 1883.

more than two years.' Frere would at once have dealt with the Zulu power, as the head centre of the movement of revolt among the natives, had he not been detained in the Cape Colony by the rising of the Kafirs both within and without the eastern border. As it was, he lived for six months on the extreme edge of the border, actively assisting in the military preparations; and the successive risings under Kreli and Sandilli were not finally put down until the end of June 1878. In the course of this, the last Kafir war, Sir Arthur Cunynghame was succeeded by General Thesiger (afterwards Lord Chelmsford), while at the same time reinforcements were sent out to Natal for the purpose of putting down the rising of the natives in the Transvaal and of bringing Ketshwayo to reason. This primary duty of protecting the Cape Colony prevented Frere from proceeding to the Transvaal, as he had originally intended, in the autumn of 1877; but in September 1878—*i.e.* as soon as his duties as Governor of the Cape Colony permitted—he arrived in Natal, again intending to go on, as in fact he did ultimately, to the Transvaal.

The position he found in Natal was this. The Boers in the Transvaal were simmering in rebellion, Ketshwayo had defied the Governor of Natal, and he or his allies had violated both Natal and Transvaal territory; the Natal Government was anxious only to devise some temporary expedient to maintain the peace, relying upon the traditional policy of playing off the Zulus against the Boers, in entire disregard of the fact that the English Government was pledged by the annexation to protect the Boers against the Zulus. 'The people here,' Frere wrote on September 30, 1878 (a week after he had reached Durban), 'seem slumbering on a volcano, and I much fear you will not be able to send out the reinforcements we have asked for in time to prevent an explosion.' His view of the general situation is best expressed in the despatch which he wrote on the very day (December 11) when the ultimatum was delivered to Ketshwayo's envoys on the Tugela. He then pointed out that the postponement of the military operations against Sekukuni, although it was unavoidable owing to the Kafir war on the border of the Cape Colony, had been most unfortunate, since it was attributed both in the Transvaal and in Zululand to a want of power on the part of the Imperial Government. The danger of the Zulu invasion was real enough to procure the acquiescence of a very large proportion of intelligent people in the Transvaal, who saw that we were justified in protecting them to

prevent ourselves from being attacked. 'This is a sound argument,' said Frere, 'if we do really protect the Transvaal, but it will cease to secure acquiescence unless we make good our promises.'

Now as to the precise charge of forcing the hand of the Home Government.

At the end of October or the beginning of November Frere received a letter from Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, dated October 2, in which the Colonial Secretary expressed an entire agreement with the measures which Frere was taking to enforce the submission of Ketshtwayo. Up to this time, therefore, Frere had every reason to suppose that these measures—which included the movement of troops to Natal—were in complete accord with the views of the Home Government. This letter was, however, succeeded by a message from Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, dated October 12, which, being telegraphed to St. Vincent, reached Frere on November 4. In this message Sir Michael says he 'feels some doubts whether more troops can be spared.' This was the first hint of change in the attitude of the Home Government. On the very next day Frere sent this reply (partly by telegraph¹), than which no language could be more urgent or precise:

Your telegram of 12th ultimo received. Special service officers useful and acceptable, but troops asked for urgently needed to prevent war of races. Cape Colony and Diamond Fields have done their duty nobly, and are relying almost entirely on colonial forces recently raised and only half organised, with small garrison, five companies King William's Town, for whole of old Colony and Diamond Fields.

State here as described by Sir Garnet Wolseley three years ago. On the other side of fordable river Zulu army, forty to sixty thousand strong, well armed, unconquered, insolent; burning to clear out white men. Wolseley's estimate of force [*i.e.* in 1875] required to bring them quickly and surely to reason not too large. Diplomacy and patience have absolute limits. In such case, by setting tribe against tribe, and race against race, victory may follow war, or practical extermination, but if victory is to be ensured on terms which will bear examination hereafter a sufficient force of her Majesty's disciplined troops under her Majesty's officers should be employed.²

In the meanwhile Sir Michael wrote on November 7 informing Frere that the Cabinet had decided against sending reinforcements, and saying that a Zulu war must be avoided in view of the complications with Russia in India and Turkey. This letter was received by Frere on December 13—*i.e.* two days *after* the

¹ This would shorten the period of transmission by about seven days, reducing it from four or five to three or four weeks.

² C. 2222.

Zulu ultimatum had been delivered. On the next day, December 14, Frere received a (partly) telegraphic message telling him that reinforcements were being sent out after all, but that they were only to be used for defensive purposes.

Why did not Frere at this eleventh hour confine himself to employing the troops for defensive purposes only, and why did he not take into consideration the urgent need for troops in Europe and in India?

Because, in the first place, the true policy of defence was to attack, and, in the second, the alternative which lay before him was not whether England was to be involved in a Zulu war or not, but whether England was to be involved in a Zulu war simply or in a Boer rebellion followed by a Zulu war.

The small force—about 6,000 men—at his disposal was sufficient to protect Natal by offensive operations, but not by defensive. 'In the judgment of all military authorities,' he wrote,¹ 'both before the war and since, it was absolutely impossible for Lord Chelmsford's force, acting on the defensive within the Natal boundary, to prevent a Zulu impi from entering Natal and repeating the same indiscriminate slaughter of all ages and sexes which they boast of having effected in Natal, at Blaaw-Krantz, and Weenen, in Dingaan's other massacres of forty years ago, and in the inroads into the Transvaal territory made by Umbellini, with Ketshwayo's connivance, within the last two years.'

He was not insensible to the difficulties of the Government, but of two evils he chose the lesser.

On April 25, 1879—*i.e.* before the despatch of censure had been received—he wrote on this point to Sir Michael Hicks-Beach:

There could be no doubt as to the state of Boer feeling, of which at the time you had little evidence before you. I felt, however, quite certain that, even if I could postpone for a few weeks or even months the inevitable Zulu war, it would be impossible to avoid a Boer rebellion. . . .

Some act of violence the Boers would certainly have committed—hauled down the flag, stopped the mails, put the administrator over the border, or done some other of the many acts of rebellion they have threatened ever since they knew we were fighting their inevitable enemies, the Zulus. We must have moved some of our troops from Natal to support law and order here, and some bloodshed would have been the inevitable result.

What would the Zulus have done? Observed a strict armed neutrality? I doubt if all Ketshwayo's power could have enabled him to observe it. His young men would certainly have washed their spears in some white man's blood,

¹ Memorandum enclosed in despatch of January 13, 1880.

whether Dutch or English would matter little to them. If Dutch, as is more probable, the Orange Free State would have been drawn in, and the Boer rebellion might have extended to Cape Colony, the ill-blood and lifelong race hatred certainly would. Such Zulu allies would have been far worse for us than a Zulu inroad into Natal, and how should I have answered you for incurring such a misfortune, and shirking the responsibility of bringing Ketschwayo at once to an account?

In fact, it seems to me a simple choice between doing what I did—risking a Zulu war at once, or incurring the risk of still worse, a Zulu war a few months later preceded by a Boer rebellion.

You must not think I was insensible to your difficulties in Turkey and Asia. I doubt whether you felt them more acutely than I did; but you must remember they were not present in their late aggravated form till we had gone too far in Zulu affairs to recede with honour or even with safety. You will remember that Bulwer's very proper demand for the surrender of Sirayo's sons was made in August last; there was no drawing back with any safety after that.

Had things gone wrong in Turkey or Afghanistan you would not have thanked me for putting off war, when it involved both war and rebellion, while you were in the midst of a European war.¹

In plain words, instead of Frere forcing the hand of the Home Government, the Home Government betrayed Frere. They allowed him to take up a definite position, and then blamed him for not retiring, when he could only have retired at the risk of incurring dangers twofold greater than the one danger which they desired him to avoid.

But the loss of the 24th Regiment by Isandhlwana—the unexpected blow which made England reel, and filled the press with columns of obloquy directed against the man whose only fault was that he was fulfilling his duty too skilfully and too faithfully—created the unreasoning belief that he had miscalculated his own resources and those of the enemy at this critical moment. To the general charge of 'rashness,' in which this feeling was voiced by Mr. Gladstone, Frere has himself replied² in these words:

An unexpected disaster, caused in Lord Chelmsford's absence by disregard of his orders, entailed a delay of five months and serious discouragement to us, and added enormously to the military prestige of the enemy.

Nevertheless, as soon as he was enabled to resume the offensive, Lord Chelmsford, moving on the same line as that he first adopted, in eight marches from the scene of the former disaster, with a column of about 6,000 Europeans, completely defeated the Zulu army and annihilated their military system.

Will any one, with this unquestionable fact before him, say I was rash in what I asked Lord Chelmsford to attempt in January with about 6,600 English soldiers, commanded by officers like Wood and Redvers Buller, Pearson, and Glynn?

¹ This letter is given in Mr. Martineau's *Life of Frere*.

² Memorandum in despatch, January 13, 1880.

It is, of course, obvious that when once Lord Chelmsford had taken the field Frere's responsibility for any military operations came to an end. But what is forgotten is the fact that Frere himself had taken the only precaution possible to prevent the occurrence of a disaster of the kind. At the end of November 1878 he sent Krüger and Bester to Lord Chelmsford to give him the result of the Boers' experience of Zulu tactics, gained in the fierce campaign in which the power of Dingaan was broken. The notes taken by Colonel Crealock reveal the remarkable fact that Krüger, in urging the necessity of laagering the wagons, said that the General's orders must be carried out every evening, 'because if they are omitted one evening it will be fatal.'¹ What more could human intelligence have done than Frere did to protect the British soldiers from the fate which overcame them? And yet it is this senseless belief that Frere was responsible for Isandhlwana that forced the Government to first censure and then to partially supersede him.

The policy which Frere recommended for the treatment of the Boers, and the actual measures which he himself took to secure the settlement of the Transvaal, have been no less grossly misrepresented.

Here again I will take Mr. Bryce's statement: 'He sent to govern the Transvaal Sir Owen Lanyon, an officer unfitted by training and character for so delicate and difficult a task.' As in the case of Mr. Morley, we have here a precise statement, and as such it can be met by a no less precise denial. Both Mr. Morley and Mr. Bryce were saying the thing that is not. Sir Bartle Frere did not appoint Sir Owen Lanyon; but the method of his appointment, and Sir Bartle Frere's opinion, will sufficiently appear from the following passage written by him to Sir Gordon Sprigg, then Premier of Cape Colony, and dated December 13, 1878:

The Secretary of State has nominated Lanyon to take Shepstone's place when-
ever he leaves [*i.e.* when Lanyon leaves Kimberley, where he was Administrator of Griqualand West]. *This was not my arrangement, and had it been left to me I think I should have arranged otherwise*, for while I believe Lanyon to be one of the most right-minded, hardworking, and able men in South Africa, I know he does not fancy the work in the Transvaal, and I think I could have done better. However, it does not rest with me, and all I have to do is to find a man fit to take his place when he leaves.²

¹ The incident is given in Martineau's *Life of Frere*.

² The italics are the writer's.

So much for Mr. Bryce's 'view' of the appointment of Sir Owen Lanyon. The suggestion that Frere advocated a policy of repression after the annexation is equally baseless. While the Zulu war was still in progress, and so soon as the period of extreme peril after Isandhlwana, when Maritzburg was hastily prepared for defence, was over, Frere went on to the Transvaal. The malcontent Boers were already assembling in arms, and the Boer leaders had gathered 2,000 men in a camp three miles from the road by which Frere approached Pretoria. Into this camp he rode singly, followed by his staff, without any military escort. He patiently listened to their grievances, and, after he had discussed the situation fully at this and subsequent meetings, he forwarded a statement of the opinions which they had expressed—a statement of which they approved—to the Home Government. Through his courage and address the danger of an attack upon Pretoria was averted, and Frere himself succeeded in winning the respect and confidence even of those Boers who were most bitterly opposed to the annexation. On the very day on which Sir Owen Lanyon brought him the welcome news that the camp had broken up, and the malcontents had quietly dispersed to their homes, he heard for the first time, through a Reuter message to the press, that the Government had determined to censure him. Truly a fitting recompense for the weeks of anxious waiting and watching at Maritzburg, and for the dangerous and self-imposed mission by which he had averted rebellion in the Transvaal. After Frere had left Pretoria on May 1 (1879), he at once made use of the information which he had gained. Acting in consultation with President Brand of the Free State, and Chief Justice de Villiers in the Cape Colony, he drafted a scheme of constitutional and administrative reform which he deemed to be alike honourable to England and acceptable to the Boers.¹ I think I am right in saying that the proposals which contained the fruits of Frere's personal contact with the Boers, and of his unrivalled administrative experience, were not even acknowledged by the Colonial Office; certainly they were not acted upon, since

¹ This scheme is given by Frere himself in a convenient form in his *Nineteenth Century* article (February 1881). It includes administrative and financial reforms (i.e. economy of cost of government), reorganisation of courts of law, survey of Delagoa Bay line—a point of great importance—and full data for representative institutions. It is particularly valuable in view of the future settlement of the Transvaal after the war.

in the meantime the affairs of the Transvaal and Natal had been handed over to Lord Wolseley.

The policy which Frere recommended—and which he would himself have put into execution—can be gathered up into these two propositions :

(i.) British rule once established must be maintained, and

(ii.) All responsibilities incurred by England by the act of annexation must be absolutely fulfilled.

This policy, and the relationship of the Zulu question to the Transvaal, are expressed in a remarkable passage contained in a private memorandum written at the end of July 1879. It is unnecessary to point out how absolutely Frere's view of the situation has been confirmed by subsequent events.

'Once assured that we intend to, and are able to protect them against Zulu supremacy (on neither of which points are they satisfied at present), they will easily be governed, and however they may grumble, as farmers sometimes do elsewhere, they may be so ruled as to become, in essentials, as content and loyal at heart as their brethren, the Dutch section of the population here, and the country will be one of the finest and richest of her Majesty's colonies, and a great addition to the strength of South Africa.

'On the other hand, any reliance on mere force in the Transvaal must react dangerously down here in the old Colony, and convert the Dutch country party, now as loyal and prosperous a section of the population as any under the Crown, into dangerous allies to the small anti-English republican party who are for separation, thus paralysing the efforts of the loyal English party now in power, who aim at making the country a self-defending integral portion of the British Empire.

'Further, any attempt to give back or restore the Boer Republic in the Transvaal must lead to anarchy and failure, and probably at no distant period to a vicious imitation of a collection of South American republics, in which the more uneducated and misguided Boers, dominated and led by better educated foreign adventurers, Germans, Hollanders, Irish Home Rulers, and other European Republicans and Socialists, will become a pest to the whole of South Africa, and a most dangerous fulcrum to any European Power bent on contesting our naval supremacy or injuring us in our colonies.'

But if England was blind and ungrateful, the Cape Colony was enthusiastic in its support. On his return to Capetown the horses were taken from the carriage and the Governor was drawn by loyal arms to Government House. And as he passed through the cheering crowds, Frere's eye was met by the welcome words, 'We endorse your policy.' At the banquet which was given to celebrate his return to the capital after this nine months' absence in Natal and the Transvaal, Frere sketched in masterly outline what that policy was. The four principles which he then laid down form as valid and complete a foundation for the government

of South Africa to-day as they did then; and I reproduce them here as the embodiment of the policy which must be followed in the settlement of South Africa to-day.

‘The first principle is this, that every subject of her Majesty in every part of her dominions should be able to live in his own house in the same security as if he were within the four seas of Old England. . . .’

The second principle is, ‘that when native tribes and native society come in contact with European population and European society, there shall be a distinct understanding whether European ideas or whether native ideas are to rule and are to prevail for the government of the people. . . . It is not by exterminating, it is not by expelling the native races that anything can be done in this direction. We know that by one means or another they must be taught to live among us, and to rise to our level without expecting us to go down to theirs.’

‘The third principle is the principle of self-government. . . . I told the Transvaal patriots that there would be no hope whatever held out to them that the English Government would retrace its steps and throw them back into the chaos and difficulties from which they had just emerged. . . . I could also assure them, and I was happy indeed to be able to point to this colony in proof of what I said, that it lay entirely with them, under the British flag, to work out for themselves, in a much shorter period than it has taken you, the same measure of independence and self-government as you possess. . . .’

The last principle is the principle of union. ‘We all know that union is strength, and a union such as you will approve—a union which will give to all who unite with you the same privileges and the same franchise as you yourselves enjoy—can be nothing but strength, and the foundation of happiness to all concerned. It must not be a union merely of this or that colony, it must be a union which will mould us all into an integral part of a great empire. . . . Is it not, I ask you, something to feel proud of, to be bound up as colonies in such an empire as this? Since our troubles began I have received from Canada, and I have received from India, letters asking me to speak the word, and assuring me you would receive from the shores of the Frozen Ocean, and from the sun-dried plains of India, any assistance you wanted to secure the European race in South Africa.’

One word more, I have spoken of the voices that were raised

in Frere's defence. The first words of sympathy which reached him after Isandhlwana were a gracious message from the Queen, sent through the Secretary of State, which I have copied from the creased sheet of the actual telegraph form. 'The Queen commands me to express her sorrow at the loss of so many brave officers and men of regular and colonial forces, and her full confidence that you will be able to meet the difficulties in which you are placed.' And among his defenders in Parliament were Lord Beaconsfield and Lord Salisbury. There were some, too, among 'the men in the street' who could distinguish. Immediately after his return to England Frere was invited to stay at Sandringham. Among his fellow guests was the present Commander-in-Chief in South Africa, who had just returned from Afghanistan. As the train waited at a junction, the passengers pressed forward to look at the faces of the Prince's guests. One man, more eager than the rest, thrust his hand through the carriage window exclaiming: 'I want to shake hands with the man who has done his duty.' Frere, who was seated by the window, smiled and pointed to Lord Roberts. 'There he is,' he said, 'there is the man who has done his duty.' 'No, no,' was the reply, 'I want to shake hands with you.'

During the few years that remained after his recall Frere never showed any bitterness. His nature was so 'selfless'—there is no other word—that he was protected from any sense of personal injury. He neither shunned nor dwelt upon the past, referring to it naturally and without bitterness. The grief which he felt at the events which followed in South Africa arose solely out of the deep sense, which came from his full knowledge, that wrong was being done, that England was laying up for herself infinite trouble in the future. Only at the last, in the twilight of failing consciousness, his mind went back to the injustice of the past, and his wife heard him murmur: 'Oh, if they would only read the further correspondence; *they must understand*.'

Brave heart and true! England shall read the words which her Ministers of State left unheeded and unread.

W. BASIL WORSFOLD.

ERMINE AND MOTLEY.

BY MAX BEERBOHM.

LIFE poses us with many riddles—*conundra*, as they were once called by a Girton essayist. One of them, which has baffled many acute persons, is ‘Why are our Judges jocular?’ Another, ‘Why do the people in court laugh at their jokes?’ Another,—but these two are enough for the present. Let me proceed to my guesses.

Of course, the term ‘Judges’ is used here generically, to include not merely Judges of the High Court, but also those of the Police Court and of the County Court. So large an order requires that one make certain reservations. There are some Judges who never make jokes. There may be—I have failed to authenticate an instance—others who make good jokes. The latter kind, like the former, is excluded from the scope of this inquiry; for, obviously, if a man jest well he must be jesting from a natural impulse, and the impulse for others to laugh with him is natural also. Remains the ‘fact of the average,’ to be denied by none whom duty or fascination has made a frequenter of courts: that his Lordship, his Worship, his Honour, are (very dull dogs, and) in the habit of jesting daily. At first sight this fact is certainly surprising. The life of a Judge is no sinecure; to no official are assigned duties more exigent of all his highest faculties. Throughout many hours of the day must he sit patiently exerting his intellect in meticulous discrimination and co-ordination of facts, and in reference of them to certain vast, vague standards which are the Law. He must pit his mind against the younger minds of counsel who are, or ought to be, already primed with knowledge of these facts heard by him for the first time; who are, moreover, subtly eager to work on any known peculiarity in him for the advantage of their clients. He must keep strict guard on himself lest human nature lure him off the flinted path of utter impartiality. And yet he must constantly be using this same human nature of his as a touchstone to the character and motives of the perfect strangers in the witness-box. He must be courteous to every one, yet put no one at his ease, and be frightening without losing his temper. And,

all the while, he must be taking voluminous notes, and never letting his mind stray for one instant to the dear trivialities of his private life. In short, all the probity and dignity of which he is capable, all his force of will and intellect, all his experience, he must, except on Sundays, be using always to their utmost capacity. Under these circumstances, one would not expect him to impose on himself any additional task. It must be so difficult to do what he has to do that it is almost incredible that he should aim at doing anything else. Yet he does aim. Voluntarily, systematically, day by day, he tries to be funny. If Nature had endowed him with a sense of humour, his jocularity would not puzzle us. But, as I have suggested, Nature has done nothing of the kind. Obviously, then, there must be for him some kind of external inducement. For this we need not seek far. Indeed, the answer to the first riddle is implicit in the second. Judges make jokes because people laugh at their jokes. A simple answer, but a true one !

Consciously to amuse an audience is a sensation fondly beloved of any one who has ever had it. Festoons of smiles, made by yourself, are as pretty a sight as you could wish for. To open your lips, knowing that you will close them to the soft music of a titter, or to a loud peal of laughter—what were more flattering than that to your sense of power? No music, I vow, can so deliciously intoxicate a man as the music of the mirth he has provoked with his own lips. And a Judge, mark you ! knows well that he can always count on that kind of music. The private jester's manner of asking for salt may, now and again, upset Mr. Gilbert's theory by failing to set the table in a roar. But no joke ever yet missed its mark from the Bench. Of course, there is always the danger that some quite serious *obiter dictum* may be mistaken for a joke and treated accordingly. But that can always be rectified by a threat to have the court cleared. One can always rebuke people for laughing when they ought to be grave ; to do so does but increase one's dignity. The impossible thing is to rebuke people for not laughing when you want them to laugh ; then one can only blush, and pass quickly to another topic. Thus many good things remain unuttered in conversation for fear lest they fall flat. Conversely, from the Bench many jokes are made which no one would dare to make on a level with his fellow-creatures. Judges know that they are insured against disaster. They know that they can always split all sides. If, in the robing-room, every morning, they ' prepared ' their faces with

burnt cork, their funniments (*not juste!*) would not be more irresistible than they are to their audiences. Well! realising how enviable their privilege is, can you, poor devil of a reader, wonder that they make the most of it?

Do not suppose that this privilege is confined to them alone. All exalted personages are able to obtain laughter on easy terms, and are in the habit of jesting. Kings, for example, are quite as jocular a class as Judges, and their habit is less notorious merely because there are no shorthand-writers on the steps of thrones. Throughout the earliest period of English history the Kings were mercifully solemn, and kept an official to make their jests for them. It was King John who happened one day to make a joke on his own account, and was so surprised at the ease with which he had made it, and so gratified by its uproarious reception, that he instantly abolished the office of jester. Probably the first sign by which he knew that he was losing his hold over the barons was their perfunctory way of laughing at his conceits. Later, when his efforts were received by them in absolute silence, he knew that all was lost, and sullenly submitted himself to their will. It is interesting to note that among the clauses of Magna Carta was one providing for the instant restitution of 'ye Kynge's Foole'—a clause which seems to me, and must have seemed to John, the most brutal and bitter thing in the whole document. The office of jester, thus revived, continued to exist down to the accession of Harry Hotspur, who, anxious to exploit his own gifts, again abolished it. Since that time 'every king his own jester' has been the rule observed by the English Court. On the whole (despite Henry VIII., Charles II., and George IV.), the abolition of the office is to be regretted. Had it been retained, the laughter of the courtiers in every reign would not, perhaps, have been louder or more frequent, but it would certainly have been more sincere. For, of course, there is always an element of insincerity in the laughter evoked by personages. Even as the courtier who laughs loudest is singled out for emolument and ennoblement, so in a court of law (despite the Judge's desperate efforts not to be influenced) the counsel who laughs louder than his learned friend is the likelier to hear the jury charged in his client's favour. And so, in guessing the second riddle, I must assume that some of the laughter in court is due to motives of self-interest. But these motives do not account for all of it. The casual spectators in court have nothing to gain by currying favour with the Judge; yet the Judge reaps quite as rich

a harvest of laughter from them as from the counsel and the solicitors and the litigants in the case which he is trying. I myself (who have never had any kind of business in the courts, and frequent them merely to feast an instinct for drama which is starved in the theatres) am really and truly convulsed whenever the Judge makes one of his jokes. If the joke were repeated to me by some one in the corridor, I should shake my head and pass on. If I were to set down in cold black and white some of the jokes I have heard from the Bench, you would hardly believe that they could have been perpetrated by any sane and self-respecting creature. And yet, I warrant, had you been with me in court, you would have revelled in them not less than I. Evidently the second riddle requires a less obvious answer than the first.

It is not that people laugh *at* the Judge; nor is it that they laugh with him out of mere pity, as one gives alms to a beggar. At the time they regard him as a wit of the first water. How is this illusion wrought on them? I hear you suggesting that 'the solemn administration of law and the making of jokes are two widely different functions, presenting in themselves that incongruity which is the basis of all wit; and what causes people to laugh in court is not really the joke itself, but the relation of the joke to its maker and to the circumstances in which it is made.' That is rather clumsily expressed, but it shows that you are on the track of what I take to be the true answer. Laughter in court is mostly a kind of nervous reaction. A man who has never been in any court will not recognise the truth of this so quickly as any one who has. He does not know the peculiar sensation of awe which steals over us as we sit in the presence of a Judge. Of course the awe is greater or less according to the kind of court and the kind of case being tried. But the difference is one of degree merely. In the pokiest county court, even though the case be but a dispute about a few shillings, we become a prey to the same kind of awe as in that grim chamber of Newgate where, in fur and purple, the aldermen support with their gross presence him who has come thither to weigh (maybe) life and death in the balance, to send one man away free, and to determine lightly how many years another man shall forfeit of the one life vouchsafed to him on this earth. Yes! Our imagination is appalled in the same kind of way—appalled by the thought of power vested in one man over his fellows. His Honour may have as unimpressive a face as any one in court. He may be suffering from a severe cold. We may have met him in private life, and

heard of him as a disappointed barrister, closing in obscurity a life which had once some chances of distinction. But here one forgets all that. This is his court, and in it he is absolute master, and before him all men are equal. On him all eyes are fixed. On his word everything depends. Our souls bow low to him. . . . Suddenly, we are aware of a miracle of condescension. He is actually saying something to amuse us! The strain on our nerves is relaxed. We explode in a roar of laughter. We subside into chuckles, beaming on one another—'Oh, *very* good! Capital! Capital!' Then, gradually, the awful spell comes creeping over us again. Again all the nerves in our bodies become taut, and again, at his Honour's pleasure, responsive to him as harp-strings to the harpist, they will vibrate into loud music.

Let any reader who is unacquainted with law courts look back on his school-days, and remember how he used to roar with laughter at all his form-master's jokes. If he will analyse that laughter he will find that (though some of it may have been to curry favour) most of it was a quite spontaneous ebullition. The very jokes for making which he would have kicked another boy in playtime really delighted him as made by his master in school-hours. His laughter was simply a nervous reaction from the gloom and terror which pervaded the air. Well, schoolmasters and Judges jest under similar circumstances, and their quips (which are also of a similar kind) are laughed at for the same reasons.

I may now look back and formulate my answer to the second riddle. 'People,' I find, must be divided into three classes. Here, then, is the answer. The casual spectators laugh because they have been sitting in a state of suppressed hysteria. The counsel and the solicitors, inured to the atmosphere of courts, laugh merely to further the interests of their clients. In the laughter of these clients hysteria and self-interest are blended in equal proportions.

Some day I must turn this essay into a broad-sheet and have it scattered over the whole kingdom. I do not suppose it would do much good to the Judges: they are sunk too low in their own jocularity to understand that there is a wide distinction to be drawn between laughter and the thing which reporters call '*laughter*,' and that the latter is really no tribute to him who causes it. My appeal would be rather to the great mass of the public, and I hope it would not be made in vain. For there is no doubt that the prevalence of jocularity on the Bench leads to

many grave miscarriages of justice. I have already enumerated some of the manifold duties which a Judge is called on to perform; and it is a fact that he cannot properly perform them when once he has become a slave to the jesting habit. He cannot serve Blackstone and Joe Miller. Slowly and surely, Joe Miller wins him away into an exclusive allegiance. Watch the infatuated fellow as he sits on the Bench, with closed eyes, awaiting some outlet for his humour. His notebook lies before him, with not one note in it. Point after vital point in the case passes quite unheeded by him. He is listening intently to the evidence, but not because he is interested in its bearing on the case. When he opens his eyes and mouth, it is only to deliver himself of some such remark as, 'It seems to have been a case of "how happy could I be with either were 'tother dear charmer away!"' (*laughter*); or, 'It seems to have been a case of "when the cat's away the mice will play!"' (*much laughter*); or to make some wretched pun, or a quotation from a popular song, or an allusion to Mr. Pickwick. Then, having cast a keen glance at the shorthand reporters, and satisfied himself that they have got his joke down, he closes his eyes, listens to the receding ripples of laughter, and awaits his next chance. So his days and his years pass pleasantly by—far too pleasantly, if we have regard to the welfare of the community; for he enjoys himself so thoroughly that, long after he has passed the age when he were too old to perform his duties, even if he gave them his undivided attention, he persists in postponing his retirement, year after year, to the embarrassment of every one concerned. In the old days Judges were corrupt. That was a great pity. But I am by no means sure that jocularities in Judges is less baneful than corruption. Away with it!

'But,' some one insinuates, 'if you succeed in stamping out judicial humour, will not the atmosphere of our law courts become intolerable? You have proved this humour to be a kind of safety-valve for the people in court. How could we dispense with it?' I was about to anticipate that objection. My genius is not merely destructive, as you will see. I admit readily that there must be in law courts some kind of comic relief; all I wish is that the right to supply it be taken away from the Judges. Of course, if the kind of comic relief supplied by them were supplied by any one else, it would evoke no laughter at all. It would therefore have to be a superior kind of comic relief, supplied by born humourists. Now, it is believed by many archæologists that the

mysterious, superfluous, young satellite who, under the title of 'Marshal,' attends every Judge on circuit, may originally have been employed to enliven the Court with quips, and that his duties, like those of the king's jester, fell into abeyance so soon as his master discovered that he could raise quite as much laughter on his own account. I propose, then, that their old functions be restored to these Marshals by an Act of Parliament; that their duties become permanent, and their number be so far increased that his every Lordship and Worship and Honour have one of them attached to his court. Of course, these young men would have to be selected with some care: no one would be eligible who could not satisfy the authorities that he was a born humourist. But, after his appointment, he would be given an absolutely free hand and a strict monopoly of all the jesting in his court. Any Judge encroaching for one moment on this monopoly would be liable to instant dismissal. This system might work well, or it might not. In any case, it would work much better than the one which I am attacking.

Remember, it is the system, rather than the Judges, that I attack. So far as I attack the Judges at all, I attack them, not as men, but only as jesters. I have a certain kindness for them as men; and my point that they do, in their love of jesting, neglect their duties does not imply that I myself, were I a Judge, should do otherwise than they. Nor do I pretend that they, as jesters, are more despicable than kings or schoolmasters. All humour generated by authority is equally bad. Nor do I take any malicious pleasure in the thought that, when they are in mufti, they are humiliated by absolute failure to amuse any one, and that a true report of their table-talk would be interlarded, not with (*much laughter*), or (*laughter*), or even (*a laugh*), but with (*raised eyebrows*), and (*shrugged shoulders*), and (*frowns*). In fact, I have no rancour against any of them, and but for my public spirit I should not cry out for reform of the system which allows them to be funny on the Bench. I forgive them their ghastliest jokes, and I hope that when, at last, their spirits pass down into the irremeable shades, and are arraigned before Brothers Minos, Æacus, and Rhadamanthus (who are themselves infernally waggish, no doubt), a lenient view of their case will be taken, and they will be drafted into some special corner of Elysium, where, with kings and schoolmasters, they may cut capers in a silence broken eternally by the crackling of thorns under pots.

MOORISH MEMORIES.

MOROCCO is the never-never land of Africa. Captious readers of the war news may, in their comfortable zeal, think the term applicable to other regions of that continent, but Morocco is the true land of rest, the country of to-morrow, whence are banished by Shereefian decree and national inclination all the discomforts attending ambition, progress, and punctuality. Here, disgusted with the haste of a hurrying world, sick of the obligations and exactions of a pretentious civilisation more tyrannous than the slavery of the East, the pilgrim on life's toilsome journey may rest as a storm-tossed vessel in a mangrove swamp—rest and rust and be thankful for the chance—rest and rust and contemplate his dignified, white-robed, yellow-slipped fellows resting and rusting, untroubled with the fretting of a world wherein Christians cut one another's throat that they may liquidate wholly imaginary chances of a pavilion in Paradise.

In his Moorish garden, hammocked between two overladen orange-trees, inhaling the fragrance of lime and lilac, shaded from the fiery enemy overhead by the cool verdure of mulberry, fig, and pomegranate, the wanderer may here realise the true art of living, with no regret for the past, no unrest about the future. Or, rather, he might do so, were it not for that accursed leavening of Saxon restlessness in his blue veins, that element of the machine that spoils the man. In the printed news-sheets just delivered by the fleet-footed *rekass*—a shrivelled stripling of Sus, who walked the two hundred miles from the coast for a couple of dollars—he is even now reading, with a feeling of contempt and wonder for the littleness of it all, the disasters on steamer track and railroad, the bickerings of rival diplomatists, the reprisals of rival armies, the winning of a race, the coming of age of a princeling, the centenary of a poet, the divorce of an actress. What on earth do all these episodes of the civilised life signify to one breathing the atmosphere of Bible days, battling with mosquitoes and sun-rays, lost in a white crowd of worshippers of a creed that scorns innovation as it scorns women? Having, with a wet towel in lieu of white flag, patched up a truce with the sand-flies and mosquitoes, he muses peacefully on the beauties of the Moorish

life, and the music of water plashing from a marble basin on the cool mosaic pavement below is soothing to him in this mood.

The rhythmic droning of labourers at work on a neighbouring building is powerless to disturb his reverie, but an undeniable interruption comes at last in the form of a knocking at the outer gate. Up jumps the squatting blue-breeched soldier from his form beneath the pomegranate-tree, testifying in his drowsy awakening to the perfection of the one God, and flings open the gates; then hurls maledictions—and would fain shut the portals too—in the bearded face of a miserable old Jew, who would seek the protection of the powerful *caballero inglés*. That unbeliever, welcoming any distraction from his somewhat protracted spell of *dolce far niente*, into a proper Eastern love of which he cannot deceive himself, bids the janitor admit the gabardined mendicant, and, with the aid of his interpreter, makes out a tale of sordid penury and rank oppression. And he presently sends the son of Shem away smiling with a morsel of his abundance, carrying his black slippers beneath the arm, as prescribed for the dogs of his race in that city of the followers of the Prophet, and with the firm assurance that the next of his accursed tribe to visit the garden will get no *fluss*,¹ but a generous dose of the bastinado to warm his uncleanly feet. This injunction to secrecy is a wholly gratuitous postscript on the part of the interpreter, who, being a high-bred Syrian, likes not such scum in the garden. Away shuffles the successful applicant, with an unnoticed *salaama* to the stolid foot-soldier at the gate; and doubtless, once outside, spits in his beard with scorn of the ease with which the dog of a Nazarene is duped, and with much wistful speculation of the wealth he quickly would accumulate for black-eyed Rachel and her curly-headed litter, if only he could sojourn awhile in the great Northern cities, in that fruitful (and, he thinks, unexploited) Bernsara,² where nest many pigeons worth the plucking.

Of another stamp, as evidenced at a distance by the obsequious mien of the doorkeeper, is the next comer, a handsome and haughty Moslem, his mule stepping quickly with head reined back, his *gelabia*³ of rich silky material. With him—the gates being thrown wide—there enters one of those privileged creatures of Eastern communities, half-nude, half-witted, holy and propor-

¹ *Fluss* are small copper coins.

² 'Land of the Nazarene,' *i.e.* Europe.

³ A white outer garment reaching below the waist.

tionately impudent, who have as good a time of it on earth as ever they can hope for hereafter. He will presently, when the soldiers and servants have duly touched with their fingers the one faded rag that girds his sacred loins, sit in a corner and drink tea with the company, unrebuked, even rewarded when his time comes to go. A picturesque feature of the Eastern life is this beggar *sherif*,¹ who condescends to take tea and alms with the air of a prince-bishop. Well is it for him that in such communities charity is still a virtue for its own sake, not an advertisement, and alms pass furtively from hand to hand, with no published lists in order of amount tendered.

And now the green tea goes round, brewed in a metal pot, with stalks of mint and cubes of beetroot sugar—a sickly concoction in truth, yet preferable to the spiced coffee that is the only alternative in a land where the sons of men appreciate neither alcohol nor cold drinks of any sort, and the daughters of men lend not the grace of their presence to the festive board. Quantity, however, makes up for quality, and the tiny cups are replenished a dozen times ere the wealthier visitor has paid his last compliment and glanced longingly at his drowsy mule that has just abandoned its third attempt to bite the near leg of the soldier slumbering just out of reach. And with him the saintly visitor, gathering up his rag and clasping his alms, glides away, assuring his host that he may, at his special intercession, perhaps have the top attic of a pavilion in Paradise, and that his reward will thus be great, though the price paid was miserable (in other words, he must not rate heaven as trashy because it is cheap).

The Moorish evening follows swiftly on the day; the night on the evening. Hawks and kites are shrieking and whistling overhead; frogs serenade the moon from a neighbouring ditch, breeding-place of mosquitoes; scorpions and centipedes meander in languid fashion from the foot of crumbling masonry and prospect for plump feet fitting loosely in their yellow slippers; and mosquitoes, having abstained during the hottest hours of the afternoon, renounce their pledge as the temperature falls with the light and return to their drinking-troughs with renewed thirst. The call to evening prayer sounds plainly from the not distant mosque—very real, very penetrating. 'The God He is God, and Mohammed is His Prophet.' And the pious glide, slipped and silent, to the mosque, and return home to their smoking kabobs

¹ A descendant of the Prophet.

and sandy bread. And the unbelieving wanderer bids his men prepare the evening meal, and is soon making inroads on his mysterious tins of food that bring a half-regretful memory of Westminster and the crowded lifts and pushing women at the Stores, and washing out the bad tea with good whisky. To the orthodox mind he is an accursed creature, vowed to the world, the flesh, and the devil . . . yet the more charitable would see in him a generous fellow, one who neither beats the beggar from his gate nor kicks his horse in the mouth, nor generally comports himself as a man of breeding should.

Once more alone, and now replete with indifferent food, the Nazarene lights a cigar and lies back in his hammock and muses over his two months' sojourn in that sleepy land—his landing at Tangier, his unrehearsed stay with the mountain chief over beyond Amsmiz, and his final halt in the white city of the plain. Tangier fills his thoughts this balmy evening—the comely Eastern princess who keeps court on the threshold of two worlds, her courtyards thronged with modest paladins of finance and immodest diplomats, Hebrews, Levantines, and Christians—who casts coquettish glances at that stern puritan Gibraltar, and dangles her white feet in the blue sea and glances occasionally over her shoulder at the desert, listening to the booming of guns before and the droning of prayers behind. Delightful, inconsequent maiden, all languishing glances and veiled passion and feline intrigue! in which European harem shall you at last shine?

Tangier once left behind, there comes the long ride inland, with the succession of home memories stirred by local colour; the smiling fields of canary-seed, recalling bird-shops in Soho; wheat and barley, recalling Tattersall's; fig and vine, reminding him of early produce in Covent Garden Market, walled in by heaps of stones or by impenetrable cactus, defying all save the camel and the evil one.

Memories of the journey, its discomforts and its relieving humours, crowd on one another this peaceful evening at the journey's end—of orthodox chiefs who kept their faith, of others who kept everything else they could lay hands on; of ugly women who came near, and of beautiful women who stayed afar; of winding tracks and bubbling streams, grim old kasbahs,¹ white Seeds² wherein lie the cleanly bones of uncleanly men of cara-

¹ Castles.

² The burial-place of saints.

vans of asses, and camels, and mules. One day a hilly track with broad views of the burning plain; the next, the flat road, a mere scratch marked by the bones of fallen camels, too clean picked to stay wheeling vultures in their flight, with inspiriting glimpses of the cool hills. Such vultures! mighty, bare-necked cleaners of the earth, the *chiffonniers* of the desert; blessed fowl, that keep pestilence out of the land and are sometimes rewarded by a careless bullet from the barrel of some idle hound passing through the country in a brief space, and caring not a Christian dollar, so long as he gets away safe, whether the plague come there or not!

Our wanderer was not a sportsman of this stamp. He would without a qualm shoot many a brace of plump turtle doves for lunch on the trek, but he found no pleasure in pumping bullets into a huge, unwieldy bird, so important when alive, so foul a mass of carrion, reared on carrion, when dead. In and out of their burrows flashed the lizards, brown and green, not, as the Latin has it, skulking from the ardour of the midday sun, but startled merely from their basking-stones by the nearing beat of horses' hoofs. Every now and then a slow, impassive chameleon would in leisurely measure cross the sunburnt path and lose itself in the brown grass by the wayside.

Of a sudden his mood changed, and memory busied itself with the crowded markets of the city . . . their fencers, bloodless in their exercises as French duellists, their story-tellers, long-winded and fond of alms, and their snake-charmers, who toy with filthy adders, encouraging them to bite their owner's nose or tongue, in a manner calculated to make decent folk shudder.

Once again these musings are interrupted by a knocking at the outer gate. Once again the soldier flings open the massive doors, and, with sounds of merry greeting, three stalwart black slaves troop into the darkening garden, bearing on their heads a choice present of food from the late guest. The dishes are placed on the marble pavement before the *caballero*; the beehive covers of straw plaiting are removed, and one discovers black olives, another kous-kous, a third a savoury mess of chickens, rice, and onions. The interpreter strolls languidly towards the scene.

'Tell them,' says his employer, 'to give their master my greetings and best thanks for his kind remembrance of me.'

'May God be with you!' says the sweet-toothed Syrian; 'thank your lord for his gift, and let him see that next time he sends new dates and green figs, for truly my companion loves them above all things.'

'Give them half a dollar each,' draws the Englishman; whereat the Shami¹ divides a quarter of a dollar among the three, makes a mental note to enter it as a dollar and a half in his weekly account of disbursements, and curses the head-slave, who murmurs a criticism of the meanness of the *baksheesh* for a scurvy dog, whose mother (of like ilk) was no nicer in her conduct than she should have been. (This, by the way, is how all Englishmen—and their protégés—are treated in the East, when too lazy to distribute their own alms. Is a Syrian gentleman to have no compensation for sojourning in so uncivilised a land?)

Silently, and with a grudging salaam, the three ill-required blacks fade into the darkness; and the traveller tastes half a dozen of the black olives and gives the rest to his followers. These squat around the dishes and a guttering candle far into the night, chattering, singing, quarrelling, withal praising Allah, who fashioned olives and chickens and fools of employers who appreciate not such gifts from Paradise. And the unconscious object of their scorn puffs away contentedly at his cigar, giving himself up to the delicious *abandon* of a summer evening in a land five centuries behind the times, yet with passing qualms of regret for that home of his in the far North, where women show a little more of their person, and where cigars need not be harvested on famine rations and gold flake treasured as if it were the precious metal itself.

Morocco is a paradise for the woman-hater. He who hath been scurvily served by the unfair sex may there find balm for his bruised spirit. Either woman is not seen at all or, if noticed in the public ways, is cursed and cuffed. Her highest ambition is to batten on sweetstuff as a caged bird on rapeseed; when her youth and beauty leave her, and kohl and henna no longer stave off the ravages of time and domesticity, she is thrown on public charity as a private nuisance. To the Moslem way of thinking, the New Woman would be as impossible of acceptance as is the New Testament. During his first few days in the land, any Englishman feels his blood boil at sight of skinny and un-

¹ Syrian,

complaining old hags keeping pace painfully on the hot, sandy highway beside the mule that bears their husband, son, or brother; but habit softens the shock, and to his first impulse of rebellion in favour of an innovation of 'equality' much abused in the fair cities of the North there succeeds a cynical acquiescence in this compensating survival of male ascendancy and female obsequiousness, this relic of the old order, at the gates of Europe and not quite at the antipodes of New York.

Woman in Morocco, he soon perceives, is no more than a domesticated animal; but then students of social evolution assure us that she was once on that footing, purchased and fed that she might do the work of the house and bear the race, in what are now civilised communities. It is the utter misconception of the romance of marriage that has raised her to a throne that she often shows herself wholly unable to grace. They manage these things differently in Morocco. The grave old pacha pays a good price to her parents for Fatma, and Fatma by that same token he keeps within doors, carrying the key of her apartments in his sash, or entrusting it to a slave answerable with his head. Fatma is pampered as long as she is young, and may even be treated with kindness in middle age. She can eat sweet cakes and drink green tea or sherbet, and deck her comely form in shoddy jewellery; and she can ride to the bath, closely veiled, and get a passing glimpse of the outer world, of which, on marriage, she took leave like any Christian novice taking the veil. And the good Si' Elarbi, her lord, is secure in his household, and would chuckle mightily could he but read of the matters that daily take up the time of Nazarene courts of divorce.

Divorce, forsooth! A good old scimitar, with damascene blade, hangs between two silent timepieces in his inner hall—somewhat dull and blunt, and demanding perchance a second stroke to make doubly sure; yet would it divorce a thoughtless wife more rapidly, more effectively, than the grave deliberations of a whole mosque full of sapient fellow citizens. And Fatma has seen the old scimitar, and thinks it looks best where it hangs, and is circumspect in her glances, particularly when, in the narrow market way, her mouse-coloured mule brushes the glossy black charger of the blue-eyed Nazarene riding even then to visit her owner and wondering whether that undulating form on mule-back is set off by a pretty face.

Forth, then, to Si' Elarbi rides the Nazarene, having already visited him many times, and having in the first instance sent him presents of clocks and preserved ginger and silver-plated trays and ambergris and sweetmeats. The influential Elarbi may or may not make himself agreeable in return in the matter of a privy trading concession down on the ocean coast, where his brother is a mighty tribal chieftain, having power over full five thousand brawny and fanatical Arabs mouthing the Shellah¹ and willing to barter wrought copper against American rifles, or, better still, to get possession of the rifles and then withhold the equivalent, gaining such time as shall enable the troops of *el Sidna*² to swoop down and declare this trading with the unredeemed to be illicit. So long as the Powers mistrust one another, and the Moorish Government (with good cause) mistrusts them all, such irregular trading is certain to proceed. The misfortune is that the importation of more rifles only aggravates the Morocco difficulty; but this is no problem for the simple mercantile mind that wants its honest hundred per cent. on the firearms and then to be quit for good and all of the country.

Beside the scheming Frank rides his interpreter, and before them runs their soldier, clearing the way and every now and again fetching a deft blow with his switch that achieves the love-lock of a Riffian or the pendulous and frothy lip of a camel. 'Out of the way! out of the way, O you whose mulish mother is even now vainly kicking at the gate of Paradise! Out of the way for my lord *caballero inglés*, O son of a mother whose consent was foregone! May your father burn merrily in the pit! Out of the way, O bastard camel, mother of slowness, abode of dirt! *Balak! balak! balak!*'³ Thus runs the chant, thoughtfully intoned by this precursor, and it is scarcely to be wondered at if the welcome he prepares for his patron should at times lack the display of enthusiasm, conveyed rather by wrathful frown and by spitting on the ground and murmuring against being thus ridden down by a Christian within the shadow of the Mosque.

Arrived at the gateway of the great man's dwelling, the party halts, and some moments elapse ere a crowd of lazy slaves and servile freedmen, loafing on a bench and criticising the newcomer, particularly his hat and half-boots, are scattered by the fine

¹ A language spoken in the Sus and generally south of the Atlas.

² 'Our lord,' *i.e.* the Sultan.

³ *I.e.* 'Out of the way! Look out!'

profanities of the soldier and interpreter, with whom one of their number is soon busy negotiating the *baksheesh* that shall be his if he instantly conducts them to his master's presence. As a matter of fact, his master is not within, for his chance of driving something of a bargain, already slender enough, with the Syrian (who at least permits no one else to rob his own private preserve) vanishes with the clattering of mule-hoofs further up the alley, and the curses of a mangy dame flung against the wall.

In courteous greeting the approaching lord of the garden bends to his horse's neck, but not instantly may his guest follow him within the gates. Fatma, it is true, is absent, but there are other ladies to be warned off to their own apartments, and only after several minutes, with distant suggestion of the opening and slamming (ay, and bolting) of gates, does mine host once more appear in the archway of the courtyard, his somewhat sensual face wreathed in the smiles of prospective hospitality. Enter to him the booted and spurred Lothario from the North, who momentarily feels the disadvantage to which khaki shooting-suit, half-boots, and Panama straw are seen beside the flowing white robes, yellow slippers, and beautifully folded turban of the country. The Moslem motions his guest to a small and comfortless cane chair, and gracefully subsides on an orange-coloured mattress beneath a shelf that proudly bears six clocks, all ticking loudly, all marking different hours, recalling to the Englishman a ladies' congress that he once was privileged to witness from a barred *guichet*, when all the fair ones talked together and each voiced a different opinion.

The hour is the hour of the afternoon prayer, and the old Moor is straight from Mosque, where he has recited the holy writings and droned the articles of that wonderful faith of trust and bloodshed, and great possibilities of proselytising, and of trouble by no means ended with the nineteenth century.

'God be with you!' says the old gentleman amiably; 'and I trust that to-day's mails from Bernsara brought you good news of your home.' This apparently inane politeness was, in point of fact, a time-saving attack on the main business of the visit; but the Anglo-Saxon had, for all his young fair face and innocent blue eyes, learnt things on his travels, and he astutely bade his interpreter parry the thrust with a polite assurance that his father was quite well (the old kadi wished devoutly in his heart that his

visitor's father might, for all he cared, burn in the pit), and that his brother had gone forth to fight his Sultana's enemies. 'Who were the enemies this time?' asks the old gentleman. 'Not the *Francés*, the nation without a ruler? Not the *Pruss*, who drink much yellow beer—men large in the waist, who ask no indemnities of our lord the Sultan? nor the Italians, nor *Mosko*, nor *Austriaca*? The Dutch? Who were the Dutch? Tradition has it that a Dutchman once embraced Ul Islam and became Wazeer and chief of the army—a false, ingratiating dog, who betrayed every master he had ever served, and recanted every faith he had ever professed. But nowadays the Dutch trouble us not, and I doubt if there is one in all Maghreb. Still,' concluded the old rogue, 'it is my wish that your brother's arms may triumph, for are you not my friend?'

At length, after much more exchange of compliment, waning patience, and mutual resolve to give over with fooling, these different types of money-making humanity were on the right footing and came to the business of the day. Quoth the Englishman, per interpreter, 'What says my friend's good brother to the syndicate's offer? In what terms has he answered my friend's letter?'

'God is great,' answered the gentle Moor, parting his grizzled beard with delicate white fingers. 'Two moons ago I had already apprised my brother, the Fki Mnasr, of your arrival from Bernsara, and, lo, he answered not. Only yesterday, though, at the hour of the evening prayer, there rode to my garden a trusted messenger from my brother. O Hmad!'—this summons brought from behind a pillar, where he had apparently been eavesdropping, a coal-black slave, who rolled the whites of his eyes encouragingly on his owner's guests. A whispered order sent this pampered animal away into the house, whence he presently emerged with a letter, oblong and red-sealed, and flanked by two female slaves bearing aloft trays with tea, coffee, cakes, and sweetmeats various. Gravely, and with due attention to an operation so important, the host added mint and sugar to a pot already overflowing in the electro-plated tray. Then refreshment was served. The old gentleman adjusted a pair of enormous round horn-rimmed goggles, and proceeded to read aloud, with a hesitation suggestive of elimination and selection, from the now unfolded letter.

The result, as communicated by the interpreter, who pounced

on each completed phrase as a matrimonial detective on a clue, ran somewhat as follows:

‘The fifth day of Moharrum in the year 1318.

‘God only is great! To my dear brother . . . greetings! May God prosper you and your house! I have pondered over your letter from the English Christian very carefully. I write you very privately that I have made inquiries and understand that this Christian’—(here a pause and some confusion)—‘is a very honourable and upright man, one who may be trusted. With regard to the monopoly treaty with the chiefs under me, several of them have assured me that they think it would be well to conclude such a treaty, because . . .’—(another pause follows, and the spectacles are deliberately dismounted, wiped, and re-adjusted)—‘if the Christian can faithfully promise to carry out his part of the bargain, we could do a very good trade. The rifles would be landed on the beach, close to the river, and a number of our men would be there to’—(a short pause)—‘receive them and hand over the money.’

The good old gentleman here appeared to have read as far as he intended, and was looking intently at his guest and sidelong at the interpreter, curious and concerned to see how far his version had been accepted. His surprise might have been considerable had he understood that concluding comment of the interpreter, to the effect that ‘the old thief down the coast was probably in league with the Wazeer himself, or had at any rate an efficient band of cut-throats handy to take over the rifles and then slit the vendors’ throats.’

Asked why he should suspect anything of the kind,

‘Because in the first place he did not hand me the letter to read to you myself—it would not be etiquette to ask for it now—and because he paused just as often as he came to any compromising passage not intended for publication.’ The Englishman was unmoved. ‘Tell him,’ he said, ‘that my people in England have just instructed me to offer Si’ Elarbi a very large share of the profits if he will guarantee the payment of the debts. And tell him also,’ he added, as a happy afterthought, ‘that I should like you to look at his brother’s signature to that letter, that you may know it again as genuine on the treaty.’

The old Moor was narrowly watched during the conveyance of the message, and he knew it. Yet that parchment face gave no sign as, calmly refolding the letter and replacing it in his belt,

'Know, O my friend,' he said, 'that my unfortunate brother did grievously hurt his hand when climbing after the father of goats¹ a week or two ago; and the letter here is in consequence both written and signed by a *talb*.² It would not, therefore, help my friend to recognise the signature if he saw my brother's hereafter.'

This naturally settled the matter, and the *bona fides* of both the Shech and his brother vanished like the smoke from a kief pipe. Yet the Frank sat on, placidly sipping his minty tea in meditative mood, reflecting ruefully on the manner in which diamond had cut diamond; for assuredly if the programme of his syndicate embraced nothing more than legitimate commercial smartness, it admitted to that in very high degree. No sign, however, of his thoughts escaped him. 'We shall presently have a great and increasing trade,' quoth he, 'and my friend's share will soon amount to thousands of dollars. How will he have them remitted?' The old fox thought a moment. It would never do to have his share in this business noised abroad, or very rapidly would his Highness the Wazeer requisition a modest hundred per cent. of the profits. 'There is,' he said at last, 'an old Jew in Rabat, protected by the French. The dog has served me long and well, and I think the dollars might safely be remitted through him. The bastard cur might, it is true, play false, and'—(this regretfully)—'there is no *bastinado* or cell for a protected subject, even though it be the spawn of the Mella. O my friend! I will muse deeply on thy generosity, and let thee know in due course how best I may receive the moneys.' Whereon the old rascal fell into such a fit of absent-mindedness that the Englishman made an almost imperceptible sign to his Syrian, and they took their leave.

Outside the city walls they rode homeward, passing through many gardens in which the bilbil was tuning up for his impassioned love-song, passing a slumbering lepers' quarter, wherein the smitten herd in peaceful orchards of vine and fragrant retreats of lilac. Through the winding gates and the darkening bazaars they cautiously pick their way, and the call to evening prayer sounds from the minarets. And the young moon sails high over the feathery fingers of date-palms; drowsy storks shake from their gnarled bills the remains of a frog supper; everywhere, everywhere is the droning of unseen insects, and the warm musky smell of Eastern spices.

¹ Perhaps the *udad*, or so-called 'moufflon.'

² A secretary.

'Allah! Allah! Allah! Give to the poor blind follower of Si' Bel Abbas! Give but a little *fluss*, a little *fluss* to burn a rushlight to the glory of Si' Bel Abbas and buy a morsel of bread; and take for thy charity all Paradise. Charity is virtue! Charity is virtue! Allah akbar!¹ Allah al wahed!²

This inviting incantation dies away in a long low wail, as the mendicant vacantly turns his empty eye-sockets towards the horsemen cleaving the gathering gloom. The Englishman, unmoved by a piteous appeal that he cannot understand, too engrossed in vituperation of the wily El Arbi and his brother pirate on the shore even to see the beggar, rides on; but the soldier, the poor, hard-working Ahmet, whose wage is ninepence a day and his keep, finds time, without slackening his pace, to slip in unobtrusive fashion a miserable coin, yet sufficient in that land for the purposes indicated, into the blind man's aimless, palsied hand. Surely, that charity shall be writ down in golden letters on Ahmet's record page, and he shall enjoy a comfortable space in Paradise, and much sherbet, and a companion with eyes like the gazelle's and a form graceful as the palm-tree. A slight interruption in the flow of curses flowing so generously over the shaven heads of the brothers Wulaffi, rich offerings from both the Syrian and Anglo-Saxon vocabulary, arrives in the shape of a string of camels, against which the little cavalcade cannons at a crossing. The camels are being hustled out of the town just prior to the closing of the gates, and are not therefore disposed to stand on ceremony. Neither is Ahmet. A vigorous slash over a shaggy knee, which nearly costs the donor his right ear, sends the leading ruminant on a kind of barn-dance in a neighbouring booth.

'O, Ho!' cries the distressed camel-man (which means 'No! No!'), and something else less suited to publication cries the enraged old slipper merchant in the overturned booth. But the little band of distinguished strangers is through the press; a few bystanders are laughing heartily at sight of their fellows in trouble—always a mirth-provoking spectacle, East and West alike; a few more curse the intruders for unredeemed Nazarenes; and the camel-driver musters his demoralised property, and the old merchant philosophically gathers up his red and yellow footgear, and they are independently and in their own minds agreed that the Christian is a pig, branded with the hall-mark of a shaven chin, and other distinguishing insignia of his clan. But verbally

¹ *I.e.* 'God is great!'

² *I.e.* 'God is the One!'

they will come to no accord on the subject, for no slipper-merchant, even when a fellow-sufferer, would converse familiarly with a mere camel-man. Yet Mohammed himself drove camels before his conversion, and camel-men have ere now become Wazeers.

The moon is overhead now, and the party halts before turning into the garden, to look, over a winding river bordered with oleander that masks the abruptness of its precipitous banks, at the distant mountains. Truly, a beautiful evening scene! Yet the Syrian feels the majesty of it only vaguely, and Ahmet notices it not at all. It is the imperturbable Englishman—the shop-keeper, the unromantic slave of Shaitan and *fluss*—who feels vain regrets and memories stirring in his bosom at sight of those earthly giants standing proudly away in the plain. Years ago—that time in Switzerland, and after he had gone down from Oxford—they used to look at the mountains in the moon in this way. Then she had died; and nothing had much mattered afterwards. . . . Yet the spell of listlessness was at this moment broken. The Atlas had recalled the Alps. Some trick of light had made the Northman hanker again after his own land. Ahmet thought of the remaining black olives, and fidgeted. The Moor has no place in his simple composition for the sensation of enjoying scenic effect. A mountain is to him a mountain, and nothing more—unless he has to cross it, and then it is also a curse. A river is contemptible in summer, when the secrets of its bed are discovered by the pitiless sun; in winter, hateful and to be reckoned with, as, discoloured with hill snow, it swirls over the slippery boulders and thirsts for victims, man and horse. The bridges of the country are few, for the Moor is never in so great a hurry as to need them. Should he reach the bank of a swollen river in mid-winter, he simply camps, without a murmur, for a month or two, until the waters shall have sufficiently abated to permit of crossing by ford or ferry. Moonlight he views with no notion of romance, but merely as cooler to his skin than sunlight. The stars serve him as they serve the mariner—to fix his course at night; but with their usefulness ends their interest. It is reserved for the cold, matter-of-fact Northern nations to find pleasure in these manifestations of Nature. And thus the Englishman, of a sudden forgetting the perjured El Arbi and the collapse of all those trading hopes that would, until his next letter reached them, burn so brightly in

certain mercantile breasts in Cornhill, drank in the silver radiance of the moon and the bubbling music of the bilbil, and his thoughts harked back over ten years of forgetfulness, touching wounds that he had thought healed ; then forwards, over the future fate of this Elysium of *dolce far niente*, the greed of Frenchmen, the lamentable indifference or impotence, or both, of his own countrymen.

Another grunt from Ahmet and a yawn from the Syrian recall him to the practical conditions of the present, and he walks his horse on to the Riad Elkazar, that had been his home these two months.

And at last he felt the homesickness strong within him, and in his ears was the cry of the mother-country for the return of the prodigal. That moment of moonlight on a silent river and on distant summits scorning the level of the plain had done it. The suspicions voiced by his interpreter had shown him that his errand was fruitless, and he resolved to return to Europe as soon as he might safely do so without arousing suspicion of how much he suspected. There are still—Hamdullah!—Eastern countries in which it is unwise to be wise ; and these countries are not always the farthest from Europe. Two more visits, each of them marked by more cordial engagements than the last, were first paid to the old pacha ; then, unobtrusively and without taking his leave, he vanished at daybreak one morning, with his servants and his tents, into that mirage-covered plain that swallows up so many and disgorges a few at the farther end of the stony tracks, where the ocean breaks against white sandy beaches and fast steamers make the port of Tangier in three days.

Back, then, went the Englishman to the lands where wines are cheap and women are purchased with diamonds instead of with cows ; where God is worshipped and alms are given with much publicity and due credit ; where cheating is unfamiliar—its place usurped by pioneering and commercial enterprise and the ministering to the wants, spiritual and temporal, of the heathen ; where, in short, all the virtues flourish and vice is utterly unknown. Yet many a night, sleeping fitfully in a barbarous climate, there would come to his ears the soft musical cry of the Muezzin :

Prayer is better than sleep !

*VENOMOUS SNAKES: HOW THEY ARE
CAUGHT AND HANDLED.*

MUCH interest has been aroused lately among medical men in India, and other countries where venomous snakes abound, by a discovery, which Professor Calmette, of the Pasteur Institute at Lille, claims to have made, of an antitoxic serum, the hypodermic or intravenous injection of which, if made before the graver symptoms have advanced very far, is an almost certain antidote to snake-bite. This serum, which the Professor terms Antivenene, is taken from the blood of horses rendered immune by repeated minute injections of snake venom.

In the year 1897 Professor Calmette applied to the Government of India for help in collecting venom for his experiments. The following is an account of how large quantities of snake venom were procured by Major Dennys, I.M.S., at Delhi, and forwarded weekly to Paris during the hot weather of 1897. I had many opportunities of witnessing the interesting operations that took place at Delhi, and can vouch for the absolute accuracy of the details herein recounted.

Before going further, however, I may as well draw attention to the appalling mortality that occurs annually in British India from the bites of venomous snakes. From the latest report on the 'Destruction of Wild Animals and Snakes in India,' it appears that during the last ten years an average of 21,000 human beings have been killed annually by venomous snakes; or, in other words, no less than sixty people die on an average every twenty-four hours from snake-bite in British India.¹ With a view to mitigating this heavy mortality, the Government of India have for many years past been in the habit of offering rewards or head-money for the slaughter of all known species of venomous snakes, viz. fourpence for each cobra and twopence for each viper or kerait. Notwithstanding the payment of large sums annually for the destruction of these reptiles, the results have hitherto been most discouraging, and of late it has become a serious question whether any

¹ These figures are taken from an article in the *Illustrated London News* of April 29, 1899.

benefit is to be derived from the payment of these rewards. The mortality still continues very heavy, and snakes appear to be as plentiful as ever.

On the principle that where there is a demand a supply is forthcoming, it has for some time been suspected that the natives of the country have in some places resorted to breeding snakes for the sake of the rewards offered for them. Whether there is any truth in this idea is very doubtful, but it certainly prevails in the minds of natives as well as European residents. The facts herein recounted render the existence of anything like snake-farming extremely problematical.

When snake-catching literally by hundreds is almost as easy as gathering cowslips in a field, it becomes obvious that the trouble and expense of breeding these creatures in a farm is not likely to be resorted to.

The country round about Delhi, with its hot and humid climate, its rocky ridges and numerous ruins (relics of bygone glory), is as well fitted perhaps as any in India for the habitat of Ophidia of all kinds. To those who know when, where, and how to catch them, like the remarkable man of whose daring exploits with poisonous snakes I am about to give some description, quite an easy and honest livelihood is to be made, and it is not surprising that Delhi should have become the home of many a professional snake-catcher.

With a view to procuring snake venom for Professor Calmette, Major Dennys employed, at a monthly wage of one pound, the master snake-catcher of the district, a low-bred Mohammedan of the name of Kullan. For this small pay Kullan undertook to supply the doctor with about 100 living venomous snakes weekly, and to extract their venom from them.

Kullan was a powerfully built little man, aged about thirty-five years. His name was well known in the neighbourhood for his skill and daring in the profession of his adoption. It was generally supposed that he possessed some kind of magic powers over the reptiles that he handled daily, and from the capture of which he earned his precarious livelihood.

A room was specially fitted up at the hospital for the purpose of these experiments. The floor was of polished Portland cement. This was considered an essential, as the polished surface on which the snakes were placed rendered them extraordinarily helpless, and enabled the snake-catcher to handle some of them in a manner

that he would not have dared to do otherwise. Snakes are scarcely able to make any progress on a polished surface.

On the particular day when I was first introduced to Kullan and his methods, the doctor ordered the three snake-catchers to bring their crawling burdens into the laboratory. Kullan headed the procession, carrying over his shoulder an ordinary canvas sack, which was literally heaving and swaying about by the movement of some sixty or eighty vipers which were confined therein. The other two men carried several small 'gharas,' or earthen pots, their mouths being closed by pieces of rag tied over them. These 'gharas' each contained two, three, and sometimes as many as four snakes, either cobras or keraitis.

It seemed almost incredible that the three men who now sat in the laboratory, surrounded by about a hundred venomous snakes, had really been able to catch them all alive during the past week, as they stoutly alleged they had done.

Major Dennys was anxious to satisfy himself on this point, and said: 'If the process of catching wild snakes is such a very easy matter, Kullan, would you be willing to take me or one of these sahibs with you some morning and show us how you do it?'

Kullan hesitated for a moment.

'Your honour thinks we breed these snakes? Sahibs have often charged me with that before, but your honour is welcome to come to our home and search the place, and, if he finds any signs of what he suspects, put us into prison, sahib. This humble one assures your honour that snakes cannot be bred in captivity. In years gone by this slave kept a number of cobras and other snakes with a hope of being able to breed them, but it was a failure. They are too timid, and he has never succeeded in breeding them in captivity. Your slave admits that he has sometimes taken cobras' eggs and kept them till they hatched. He has also kept in captivity a female viper who appeared heavy with young. After a time she presented your slave with eleven young ones, and so he got the reward for twelve vipers instead of one. But this is quite a different thing from breeding snakes, sahib.'

'But,' said the doctor, in a conciliatory tone, 'I have no wish to prevent your earning your living by catching snakes. If you do not breed them, and are able to catch them as you assert, you have a perfect right to the rewards you receive, and I will help you by making it known to district officers that there is no doubt

that you do not breed them. But you must let me satisfy myself first that you catch them as you say you do.'

'Very well, sahib,' said Kullan, 'if you are prepared to come with this humble one some morning he will show your honour how he catches snakes.'

A short time after this Kullan demonstrated in the most unmistakable manner his marvellous power of finding snakes in their natural homes. Major Dennys told Kullan to meet him on a given morning at the hospital and accompany him to a spot previously unknown to the snake man. The doctor then took him to the Delhi jail garden and set him to work to try and find venomous snakes.

Kullan smiled a grin of satisfaction when he realised what was before him. He admitted before he commenced his work that he had poached this very garden for snakes some years ago, and that he had made a great bag; but he had been caught trespassing by a jail warder and chastised, hence he had not been there again.

The man then set to work, followed by a little knot of spectators, consisting of jail officials only. He first approached an orchard of lime bushes armed, as he always was, with a small stick, two feet long, with an iron hook at the end. It must be understood that up to the last moment Kullan had no idea whither the doctor was going to take him.

After a few minutes of searching he called out: 'Look here, sahib,' and he pointed out a small viper (*Echis carinata*) coiled round the twig of a lime bush, apparently fast asleep, for it was quite motionless. He told the spectators to stand well aside, and then with a dexterous and lightning-like movement he planted the hook between the snake and the twig on which it was coiled, and jerked the reptile on to the ground. The vicious little viper, about a foot in length, immediately coiled itself into a little knot, and began slowly rubbing its coils against each other, producing thereby a hissing noise, not unlike the hiss of an angry cobra.

Kullan's method of securing these reptiles after he has brought them to bay on the ground is peculiar, and quite different from the way in which he deals with other snakes. The *Echis carinata* is a small viper, seldom more than eighteen inches in length, and is the most deadly, aggressive, and ferocious of all venomous snakes in Upper India, with the exception of the Russell's viper. The latter, however, is seldom found in the neighbourhood of

Delhi. Owing to the knot-like condition into which the echis coils itself when on the defensive, it is quite impossible for even the dexterous Kullan to seize it by the tail, as he fearlessly does the cobra and the kerait. Then again, the echis keeps its head almost hidden from sight among its coils, and only shoots it out when it strikes at its adversary or its prey. It also has the power, when coiled on the ground, of propelling its whole body forward to a distance of a foot or more with a sudden jerk. Kullan, knowing the habits of this viper so well, begins by dangling a dirty rag in his left hand just out of striking distance, and so engrossing the creature's attention in that direction. In his right hand he holds the hooked stick, but this time with the hook towards him. He waits patiently till the viper exposes his head for a moment from among its coils, and then in an instant he pins the head to the ground with the butt end of his stick, firmly, but not sufficiently roughly to injure the reptile. Then in another half-second he seizes it by the neck between his thumb and index finger. He then catches hold of its tail with the other hand, and while an assistant holds open the mouth of the canvas sack, he jerks the viper to the bottom.

Vipers (as their name implies, though the fact is not generally known) bring forth living young, and are not oviparous snakes like the cobra, the kerait, and many other species of Ophidia. A female viper that was kept in captivity by a friend of mine produced ten or twelve baby vipers one night, and it is a curious fact that every one of the babies shed its skin within a few hours after birth. The bite of an infant viper only an inch or two long is almost as deadly as that of a full-grown snake of the same species. The fearless Kullan nearly lost his life some years ago by the bite of a small echis not two inches long. A missing top joint on his left index finger, and the mark of a ligature deeply embedded in the flesh of the upper arm, are the result of what he admits as his folly in attempting to handle a small viper which he then thought too young to do any harm.

There is no snake, except the Russell's viper, that Kullan has such a wholesome awe of as the echis; for while he will play with, bully, and handle with impunity the cobra and the kerait, he never becomes at all familiar with the comparatively small and insignificant-looking, but ferocious, echis.

Having proved, by finding two more during the next ten minutes in the same lime orchard, that to him the finding of

vipers was an easy matter, Kullan proceeded to search for some other snakes.

Presently he came to an old dry well, one of those wide stone masonry structures so commonly found around Delhi, which were constructed generations ago in the time of the Moghul emperors. He looked into it for a few moments, and then asked one of the jail officials to take off his 'puggree,' or turban, and let him down into the well. It was only about ten or twelve feet deep. At the bottom Kullan remained for a few minutes examining the earth most carefully.

He peeped into every crevice and corner, and pushed his stick into many holes. Eventually he howled, 'Send me down a ghara, some one, will you?'

The ghara was let down attached to the end of a turban. Then began a most exciting spectacle. Kullan was to be seen at the bottom of the well, inserting his hook gently into a hole between two stones and then jerking it out again. At last with one of the outward jerks he managed to bring out about four or five inches of the tail end of a dark-coloured snake, which he grasped at with his hand. The snake was, however, too quick for him, and withdrew itself before Kullan could seize it. The contest commenced again, and eventually Kullan managed to get a grip of the serpent's tail, and in another instant was dangling a large kerait in his left hand. Every time the creature tried to raise its head to get at the fingers that gripped its tail and suspended it, the man gave it a jerk and knocked the head down again. He then lowered the head gently down into the mouth of the ghara, and the snake, being only too anxious to get out of sight and harm's way, began to coil itself up inside the vessel, Kullan meantime slowly lowering the tail till the reptile had vanished. A bit of rag was then tied over the mouth of the vessel.

Kullan could, no doubt, have found many more snakes that morning in the jail garden, but time would not permit.

Let us now return to the laboratory and witness the process of venom extraction from the hundred odd venomous snakes the three snake-catchers had brought.

Kullan had taken four large cobras from their receptacles by gently placing his hook round the thickest part of their bodies, and drawing them slowly out. He threw them on the ground in front of him. Each snake immediately raised its head to its

utmost height, spread out its hood, and, facing the intrepid snake-catcher, began to hiss furiously, its beady eyes flashing, and its forked tongue darting incessantly in and out of its mouth.

The creatures were on the defensive, but not one of them attempted to strike at the master who sat so serenely in front of them, so long as he did nothing to annoy them. He talked to them as if they were his dearest friends. After a time one or other of them would lower its head, collapse its hood, and begin to try and wriggle away. Whereupon Kullan would give it a smart little rap on the tail with his stick and bring it instantly to attention again. Whether this man possessed any special magic spell over these cobras, or whether the description given below of how he could handle and play with them was simply due to his method, I cannot say. He himself repudiated the idea of magic, and asserted positively that any one who had the necessary nerve and dexterity could do exactly the same. He used no reed instruments or music of any kind to propitiate the reptiles. He would simply squat on his haunches in front of them, and after they had been hissing and swaying their uplifted heads backwards and forwards for a few minutes he raised his hands above their heads and slowly made them descend till they rested on the snakes' heads. He then stroked them gently on the back of their necks, speaking all the time in the most endearing of Hindustani terms. The serpents appeared spell-bound. They made no effort to resent the liberty, but remained quite still with heads uplifted, and seemed to rather enjoy it. Presently his hands would descend down the necks, about three inches below the heads, his fingers would close loosely round the necks, and he would lift them off the ground and place them on his shoulders. The looseness of the grip appeared to be the main secret. The snakes being in no way hurt would then slowly crawl through his fingers and wind themselves round his neck, his shoulders, and his arms. They appeared to realise that no harm was to be done them, and they made no further effort to resent the handling. He would pick them gently off one arm and place them on the other, and, in fact, stroke them and pet them as if they had been a pair of harmless worms.

On one occasion he made the onlookers' blood curdle by taking up a large black cobra by the neck and placing its head towards his open mouth. The inclination of these snakes is to crawl quietly out of sight into the first hole they can find, and

so the reptile began to crawl into his mouth. He waited his opportunity and then suddenly closed his teeth firmly on the serpent's head. This, it is needless to say, was violently resented by the snake, but it was powerless for harm and could only show its indignation by desperate wriggling of its body, while the man maintained a firm grip of its head between his teeth, at the same time letting both hands drop to his side. After a few seconds he seized the snake firmly by the neck, and released its head from between his teeth.

He never had the smallest difficulty or hesitation in seizing any cobra by the tail.

A cobra when thoroughly roused to anger is by no means the same gentle creature as those I have just described, which allowed the man to handle them with impunity. He is now a most formidable beast to approach, striking out desperately at every moving thing within and even out of his reach. But even in this condition Kullán had no difficulty in seizing the largest of cobras. He would hold up and shake a rag in his left hand. On this the infuriated reptile would rivet its gaze. With his right hand, from behind, the man would then suddenly seize it round the neck about three inches below the head, and an assistant would fasten firmly on to its tail to prevent it winding round Kullán's arm. His right hand would then slide forward till he had fastened his fingers round the neck, just behind the jaw. He would then insert the rim of a watch-glass between the jaws, the grip on the neck would be slightly relaxed, and the serpent would viciously close its jaws on the watch-glass, and in doing so squirt the whole of its venom through the tiny holes of its fangs, into the concavity of the glass.

In this manner snake after snake was made to part with its venom into a watch-glass. Often between sixty and a hundred snakes were so dealt with in the course of a morning.

The watch-glasses were then placed on small glass stands in a plate swimming with melted beeswax. Large glass bell jars were then heated so as to drive out most of the air in them, and these were inverted over the plate on to the wax. The entire plate was then placed on a shelf, and the venom allowed to dry in vacuo for seven days. At the end of that time the dried venom (a flaky yellow powder) was scraped off the glass with a sterilised knife, the powder was hermetically sealed up in small glass tubes, the tubes labelled showing the species of snake and date on which the

venom was extracted, and the whole supply forwarded weekly to Professor Calmette. In this condition the desiccated venom maintains its virulence for months.

It must not be supposed that even in the dexterous hands of a man like Kullan the manipulating of snakes and collecting of venom were unattended by considerable danger. The man nearly lost his life on two occasions during the above operations. On the first occasion I was present when the cunning of his hand was outdone by the agility of a particularly ferocious echis. I shall never forget my horror when I realised that the man had been outwitted and had been fairly bitten on the tip of his finger, nor can I express my admiration of the calm fortitude that he showed on that occasion. Whether it be that he really had no fear or whether he was ashamed to show it I know not. It happened thus: He had placed a large active and very aggressive viper on the polished floor, and was proceeding to pinion it in the usual way. The snake seemed to comprehend his tactics, and for a considerable time Kullan's efforts were foiled. The little creature made many futile attempts to attack its aggressor by springing forward at Kullan's naked feet, but owing to the slippery floor it was unable to make good its attack. At length, after repeated failures, the man succeeded in pinning the viper's head to the floor, and his left hand seized the neck. The moment he did this the snake coiled itself vigorously round his hand, and before the assistant could get a grip of the tail it had slipped through Kullan's fingers, and in doing so drove one fang (fortunately there was only one fang prick) into the fleshy part of the man's middle finger, just below the nail. In a second he had dashed the reptile to the ground, and was sucking with all his might at the bitten finger. The doctor in another instant had placed a ligature round the base of the finger and another just above the elbow.

The doctor then pulled out a scalpel and was about to amputate the last bone of the finger, but Kullan would have none of it.

He smiled placidly and said: 'Do not frighten yourself, sahib. I shall be all right. There's no necessity to prevent my earning my living by cutting off my finger. I have been bitten many times before and am still alive, and I'm not going to die this time either. Just take that knife and cut my finger open, deeply, right down to the bone, over the spot where the fang entered,' and he held out his finger to the doctor, who promptly did as

he was bid, while Kullan stood there and scarcely winced at the operation.

'Now, sahib, kindly tell them to bring me a leech,' said Kullan, all the time sucking hard at his finger.

In a few minutes a leech was made to fasten firmly on the bottom of the wound.

'Enough,' ejaculated Kullan. 'Now I will ask but one more favour, sahib, and that is to excuse your slave doing any more work with the snakes to-day. I will return next Wednesday as usual with plenty more snakes.'

On the following Wednesday Kullan, true to his boasting promise, turned up as usual with his two assistants, and, though his bag was not as large as usual, he had brought with him enough snakes to kill a whole regiment. His hand was in a sling, he had removed the ligatures, and the arm was much swollen, but he was otherwise well and only complained of feeling rather weak. He said that three or four hours after the bite he felt very ill and thought he was going to die. His friends sent for a Fakir (a holy man), who fumigated him with a strong incense of sorts and repeated incantations, and in a short time he began to feel better. The next day he was out catching snakes again.

On another occasion, about a month later, Kullan, having extracted the venom from a large number of vipers at the laboratory, took the creatures to the district magistrate to receive the usual head money. The custom was for him to decapitate all the snakes he brought and then to count the heads in the presence of an official. The heads were all lying about, and Kullan was placing them in little heaps according to the different species. While he was doing this one of the heads (which retain mobility for some time after being severed from the trunk) fastened its two fangs into the loose skin of Kullan's hand between the thumb and index finger. The official present immediately placed a ligature on the arm above the bite and with a pocket-knife freely incised the skin over the punctures. What Kullan did after this I know not, but he was apparently little the worse for the bite and turned up the following week with a good supply of snakes. It is possible of course that the decapitated viper on this occasion was not very virulent, for it had had all its venom extracted the day previous, and even if more venom had meantime been secreted, it is a question how far a decapitated head of a snake would be capable of injecting venom through its poison fangs. It is more than

probable also that the man Kullan, who had survived the bites of so many snakes, had by this time become more or less immunised like Professor Calmette's horses.

In Upper India there are but four poisonous species of snakes known, viz. the cobra (*Naja tripudians*), the kerait (*Bangarus cæruleus*), the common viper (*Echis carinata*), and the Russell's viper (*Daboia Russelii*). Of these four varieties the cobra and the kerait account for the majority of deaths among human beings, because they are constantly found in and around human habitations, and are, therefore, more apt to come in contact with human beings. The cobra is the least offensive of the four varieties.

A cobra's strike is slow and laboured as compared with the lightning-like strokes of the viper, and Kullan knows this so well that he often deliberately allows a cobra to strike at his hand and then withdraws it just before the jaws come down on their object. But though the bite of a full-grown cobra is almost certain death to a human being, he is not in the least aggressive. If one only gives him time (for he is a slow mover), he will always scramble into a hole or under a stone on the approach of a stranger. Those who had the opportunity of witnessing the interesting operations at Delhi will agree with me when I say that of all venomous snakes in Upper India the cobra is by far the gentlest, best behaved, and most gentlemanly. If left to himself he would never harm any one. When he does use his deadly fangs it is almost always for purposes of self-defence, because he is trodden upon, or pushed into a corner, by some one unaware of his presence.

In conclusion a few words more regarding the remarkable man Kullan. He was a professional snake-catcher by heredity. His father and grandfather before him followed the same profession, and both were eventually killed by the bite of a snake. He disowns all connection with the so-called snake charmers of India, who profess to exert a magic spell on snakes by means of weird music and incantations, and make a living by carrying reptiles about and making them perform before an admiring crowd.

Our friend Kullan and his gang have never attempted to make a living by showing off their marvellous dexterity in handling snakes. Their income is derived solely from catching and earning the head money offered for them.

ANTIVENENE.

PLOTS.

'The limbs o' the plot—no more, I hope.'—*Henry VIII.* act i. sc. 1.

THE literary virtuoso, putting his wits to gentle exercise in the fields of contemplative retrospection, must have often reviewed, in a sort of anæsthetic wonder, the self-condemnatory processes of the typical historical conspirator. By what insane rendering of principles he (this historical conspirator) thought to justify his machinations; by what motives, by what pressure of disordered ambitions, he was compelled to deeds foredoomed to failure; how he, an inconsiderable rebel, could ever have dreamed of penetrating deeper than through the remotest outworks of established authority before he should rebound in fragments from the wall against which he had tilted—here are conundrums among which every browser in the records of the past has ineffectually nosed for a grain of reason. History is littered with the barren chaff. Cabals, schemes, intrigues—all short cuts into blind alleys—all, if not purposeless, at least ill-calculated—confuse the passage of events with an innumerable concourse of side-influences. There was never a hawk, it seemed, sailing stately on, but a cloud of chattering pipers teased its flight. Such are the conspirators who thought to confound the sure direction of history. The beams of the scaffolds of yesterday are grooved with the ropes that strangled them; the edges of the axes are notched from biting on their neck bones. Why they so wantonly conspired—absurdly staking their all upon a single ticket in a lottery of ten thousand tickets—could have no moral but that of the over-production and consequent valuelessness of life. They speculated with the trash—one chance in many. Life to them, we must suppose, was no more than a red counter in a game of 'Reversi.' The turning up of a remote black disc might mean the quenching of a whole row of flaming pieces, among which might or might not figure their own particular one. It was the game, and they played it.

Well, they plotted—the Guy Fawkeses, the Marino Falieros, the Perkin Warbecks—they plotted solemnly, hopefully; and all the time it would seem impossible for any sane man to prognosticate

other than sure disaster to their schemes. But what inclined each to his choice of plot—when the world hummed like a wood with viewless intrigue—would read stranger than fiction in the record, for it would be quoted from the history of the human heart.

• From the Stars to the Supers! We have very few conspirators nowadays. Your author is almost your only plotter; but what inclineth him to the one scheme out of many that offer is as great a mystery as that other. He sits on saddle-bag instead of saddle; he wields the pen in place of the sword; he hath the freebooting alphabet at his command. The world lies at the point of his weapon; yet he seems often as wilful as Simon Fraser in his adoption of the purposeless intrigue.

What inclines him, indeed, to take or reject, unless it be that very thing that influences the *ordinary* person in his choice of a dish at a restaurant?—the mood of the moment, to which a hundred of little secret tributaries may have subscribed. There are gourmets among us (authors) who will sip and reject, or sip and approve, as daintily as bees in an April meadow; there are sybarites whose biliary humour is all for the sickly and oversatisfying; there are the simple appetites, of uniform unsensitive palate, to whose nets, it may be said, all that comes is fish—just appreciable changes on a single flavour. These should know their tastes—each selecting, appropriately to his own, from the bill of fare. In point of fact, they are quite wont to abuse them. Moved, no doubt, by the gastronomic enjoyment expressed in the face of his neighbour of the different temperament, any one or either will select a dish antipathetic to his constitution, doing violence in the result to what he would indulge. The gourmet will toy with the plain joint of conservative fiction, thinking to express a new juice of æstheticism from the commonplace; the sybarite will hope to stimulate a demoralised appetite with stinging *hors-d'œuvre* of epigram; the simple novelist (*Anglicè*, as one might say, the plain dealer or honest tradesman) will be moved to the discussion of a nauseating hash of 'problems.' They will all (to bring them together round a fount, so to speak, of inspiration) think that 'Plot' is like a great Bodega cheese, for every-one that lists to cut from.

Heavens! what a salmis of figuratives! It were better to hark back to the leading comparison—to the unattached conspirators of history whose scheming came into the day's marketing, as it were. History keeps its sanity more or less over its

detailing of the essayed plots of these. What a lunatic register it would be, did it try to enumerate the rejected ones!

What to leave in one's ink-pot! Does one let the liquid gall-dry in it, there is to be seen a thick precipitate at the bottom. That is what fell from the pen when, in writing, one shook from it all but that that one desired to say. Here and there, if one looks closely, show up little prominences among the refuse. These are rejected plots, thrown away arbitrarily or not as the case may be. Possibly, if one now and again were reclaimed, liquefied into words and given pen-point, it might redeem itself in the eyes of its former contemner. The mood that cast them out may have relented. Let us, in our present one, at least have up two or three we wot of from the dregs, and reconsider their case.

THE PLOT OF THE ABHORRED CRIPPLE.

He was an abhorred cripple, despised, an outcast—the scape-goat of Society. None, within his memory, had ever addressed him from an assumed common standpoint of equality. He hated his fellows. How to retaliate on them? How to command their fear, if not their respect? He joined a Secret Society—a modern Vehmgericht. A man was to be slain. Lots were drawn for the deed; to the cripple fell its commission. He went forth—a lost soul wilfully obliterating its every footprint behind it as it walked, for that its pursuing Guardian Angel might hunt counter. He went forth, into a desolate place, wandering blindly in his evil exultation, and came nigh to being engulfed in a quagmire. A stranger riding afield, at the critical moment rescued him; nay, more, spoke him fair, sympathetically, as in unaffected recognition of the gracious equality of all human souls. For the first time in his life he felt sane and self-respecting. And then, by way of a chance reference, he learnt that this stranger was he whom he was deputed to kill. He had wilfully eluded his Angel. The man he slew, and cast into the morass; and then at length his Angel overtook him; and, looking into his face, shrouded its own, for evermore to be behind him a formless horror; and the marsh and the desolation of the waste enclosed his soul, as it were a tree age-long riveting itself about a toad that had once sought sanctuary in its hollowness.

Now—as if Heaven for his deed denied him the prerogatives of unfulfilment—returning to the world, recognition, respect,

prosperity, like full-ripe fruit came away into his hand at a touch. Only, on the highest bough, heavy-bosomed love swelled without his reach. But, of its own weight, it drooped—drooped; until at last it came into his range of intimate vision—almost of touch—and he saw in it the fruit of his crime, the child of the man he had murdered. (What follows? Here the salvage gives out. We fancy that eventually the cripple, an apostate to his own religion of retaliation, is ‘concluded’ in his turn—and in the quagmire—by another member of the Vehmgericht. And what becomes of the lady? Doubtless she goes on ‘cutting bread and butter.’)

THE PLOT OF THE FEARFUL HEAD.

(*An Italic Story.*)

Some years ago a head (we think of an Earl of Suffolk, who was executed under order of Henry VIII.) was actually discovered, in an extraordinary state of preservation, in a box of sawdust. Very well: the head of our Earl (cut off for an extremely aggravated deed of wickedness) is also preserved in a box, and is an heirloom committed by the reprehensible creature himself to the custody of his descendants, each generation having to accept without question and under the most fearful threat of anathema the abominable trust. Now the head (never, by order of its original consignee, to be disturbed or revealed to mortal vision) remains in its box working havoc—like the prodigy of Glamis Castle—on all who, from scepticism or daredevilry, misdoubt its infernal influence upon the successive representatives of its race. None of these latter, however, so much as dreams of repudiating the malevolent trust—though it signifies to him, as to his predecessors, either a self-conscious process of dementation or a gradual moral degeneracy; until, upon the succession of the —th Earl, love takes on its shoulders the burden of the accumulated terror. Armed with only her devotion and a mirror (perhaps she had been prettily reading of Perseus in the ‘Tanglewood Tales’), *She* ‘tackles’ the curse in the gloaming and, never withdrawing her eyes from its reflection in her glass, opens the baneful casket, sees a top-dressing of sawdust, and forces herself to lay bare with her fingers *that which lies beneath*. Then, in that awful moment, is revealed a severed human head—of indescribable *inhuman* expression—the wide blue eyes of which, protruding from the dusty flakes, *are looking at her*. Now comes the most ghastly crucial test—the battle between Love and Hate—between

sin and purity. The eyes are drawing hers to turn from the negative, and address themselves to the positive, apparition. Does she succumb and obey, *she knows that she will shut down the unconquered curse into its coffin once more, and will then herself go raving mad.* The struggle sways her soul. Unnamable suggestions seem to circle round her head. The agony tears her. If she could only once sob, cry out! Suddenly she is conscious of a change taking place in the aspect of the horror. Its eyes seem to flicker—fade—fall in; an expression of terror grows out of and dominates the evil will. Seeming to gnash its teeth in rage and fear, the head collapses, sinks into dust—and *is gone.* Love, of course, seeks the floor in a swoon.

And, after all, it was only exposure to the air that the monstrosity had dreaded, manœuvred to guard itself from, and eventually succumbed to. With the fading of its eyes, the curse is withdrawn. Indeed, Love can never very definitely recall the nature of the ordeal to which she was subjected; for the casket, upon examination, is found to contain nothing but dust and dusty fragments. The moral is, of course, of the self-damnatory processes of moral cowardice.

THREE PLOTS OF LOST AND RECOVERED TREASURES.

I. OF THE TREASURE LOST IN THE CRATER.

An old man (not of these islands) had, for all relations, two sons and a young grandson. The sons he feared and hated; for he knew that, coveting his wealth, they desired his death. But the grandson he loved, and him he designed to make his heir. At length—foreseeing that the scarce governable cupidity of the two elder rogues would be like to end in violence to himself and the boy—he secretly realised on all his property; converted this into imperishable gems; secured the stones within a light belt of steel mail, and, fastening the treasure about his waist so that it was well concealed, took his grandson by the hand and led him in secrecy, at a fortunate moment, from the lonely house. He intended to go without sign; to sojourn, disguising his identity, in a distant place. The two—the old man and the boy—were inseparable companions. Now they went forth in love together, and their way led over a pass that skirted the crater of a seldom dormant volcano. But the duet of rogues—though they knew

nothing of the gems—had not been blind to the purposed flight. And they followed the runaways, and, on the mountain, came up with their father. But he, already scenting the pursuit, had hidden his grandchild in the hollow of a blasted rock that hung nigh to the lip of the crater. Now the sons, blasphemously extolling Providence, realised upon the opportunity, and slew their father and cast his body into the crater, so that it disappeared within the nameless pit thereof. And they sought the boy and, not finding him, reasoned of their own iniquity that the old man had, out of his irreclaimable venality, destroyed and hidden his companion by the way. Then home they went, ‘rejoicing in that tide;’ and, thinking to profit of their wickedness, were presently aware of the truth, and of how they were caught and mauled in the springe of their own setting.

Now the boy, witness of the parricide, emerged, when they were gone, from his hiding-place, and presently took service and became a shepherd on the mountain. And always he was wont to haunt the locality of the crime, driving his flock to the highest pastures. And this he did till the mountain began to throb and menace, moving in labour, and groaning like a thing that wearied of self-repression. Then one day there came to the crater edge two men—bestial lost souls, haggard and depraved. And they gazed over into the pit, and presently upon one another; and the boy, from his eyrie in the riven stone, saw them, and that they were his uncles. And the two spake, saying each to the other: ‘Go you down and seek to recover the belt, for else are we destitute, save we go to fatten ourselves for the gallows.’ Yet neither would descend, each dreading the terror of the place and the low-snoring gullet of the pit, and not less that, did he recover the treasure, the other should profit of his position to snatch the prize for himself, hurling back the adventurer to his death. So, quarrelling, in a little time they came to raging passion; and presently, in the blind grapple of fury, they stumbled on the brink, clutched, crashed over, and rolled screaming to their fate. Now the deep-set mouth of the crater seemed to open, as a fish’s mouth opens gasping at a worm; and into it the fated wretches were drawn. And immediately—as it were the casting forth of some gravel or foreign body taken with the other—a shower of scorix was discharged with a bellow from the orifice; and thereafter all fell still. But when at length the watcher dared to emerge and look over into the pit—there, shot upon a projecting sulphur stone, within reach of his crook, was the belt of gems, oxidised and

blackened, but whole. Thus it was, prosaically no doubt, that the two bodies in their foundering released some gases, long confined beneath that choked opening to the gullet of the crater, that was further plugged by the calcined remains of their former victim. But romance must give the old man's spirit some credit for the result.

II. OF THE DETECTIVE BALLOON.

Peter Piper was in despair. For him, as he thought, the world held no further illusions. Money and credit, through the breaking of a bank, had failed him; his friends were paying back the capital of affection he had invested in them in instalments of cheap rebuke; his *fiancée's* papa had shown him the door. He thought it all a curse of inheritance—the visitation of the sins of the father. For *his* had been a notorious miser; and when the miser's wealth—chiefly crystallised into precious stones—had been all stolen one night, leaving behind it not so much as a single hop-o'-my-thumb pebble whereby to track the thief, the miser had died incontinently of a broken heart. Broken bank, broken credit, broken trust, broken heart—all 'stony-broke'! Peter Piper sought about for an attractive means to a final break—that of the thread of his own existence. Wandering into a holiday enclosure, wherefrom was about to take place a balloon ascent, he saw, and jumped to, the method, scrambled into the empty car, and resisted all the aéronaut's attempts to dislodge him. In the racket and confusion that ensued, by some error the balloon was cut adrift, and Peter found himself committed alone to a course that was not altogether the one he had designed to take. For, alas! this course showed itself by far too irregular. He had intended only to be carried irresponsibly aloft, and so from an immeasurable altitude to drop over the basket edge. He never could control his reason on or at heights. Now, no sooner was he soaring than his aspirations fell. But all desire to follow them had quitted him. He longed most ardently for the feel once more beneath his soles of the good flat earth, even were he consigned to nothing more profitable than a cinder heap. And in the meantime the balloon (a moderate one, say, of some twelve yards in diameter, and only partially filled with forty out of the fifty thousand cubic feet of gas that were its complement) swooped and tumbled along within dangerous distance of those trees and spires that are their Casquets to aerial mariners. He was now tearing across 'Crackskull' Common, midway on which stood up a gaunt

and crumbling chimney-stock—the old-time flue to a ruined saw-mill. Crash!—the enormous skin, palpitating like a huge iridescent jelly-fish in a current, ripped through a clump of trees—spouted gas from half a dozen rents—dropped—reeled—rushed upwards on a dying wing, and came thud with its car midway upon the unstable chimney. That snapped like a carrot. In the midst of a downfall of wreckage, padded with the collapsed envelope Peter came to earth. When, presently, in the midst of a clamorous concourse, he found his senses, it was to know their recovery incidental to one much more marvellous. For, from the disparted crest of the flue had been spilled, in its fall, the long-lost treasure of gems—the hoard of the defunct miser.

How had it come there? Why, to be sure, it was remembered that the mill had been owned in past years by an odd eerie character—a little, grim, uncanny steeplejack, who worked not, neither span, save the web of secrecy that enwrapped him and his ruined eyrie on the common. And this gnome (long since passed) had nursed a grudge against the miser, and——

III. OF THE DIVER AND THE DEVILFISH.

A diver, sent to raise a foundered chest of ingots, has just reeved his tackle to the load when he is approached by a monstrous squid. Two of the creature's tentacles embrace the man, three the locker, while three cling to rocks. The diver dares not signal to be hauled up, lest the gear snap under the enormous strain. Succeeding for a moment in fighting off the clutch of the two hideous arms, he severs with his axe the three that are rock-fastened, and on the instant gives the signal for the chest to be raised. Through some seconds of agony he sees the tackle tighten—the load stir, hesitate, lift, with terrible leisureliness. Suddenly, it shoots towards the surface, the squid flopping over, though still fastened to it. Wild swaying tentacles flog themselves towards him; the tip of one flips him and clings. It is torn away, writhing frantically at him. Reaching the surface with his treasure—like a very self-stultifying miser—the insensate monster is destroyed by the diver's comrades.

TWO (SKELETON) PLOTS OF MYSTERIOUS DEATHS.

I. OF THE POISONED FLIES.

A certain spot on a forest road gains an evil notoriety from the fact that, during a short period, wayfaring bicyclists are frequently

being thrown there and killed. Sometimes the injuries to the victims seem insufficient to have caused death. There is no extraordinary difficulty to be circumambulated or peril to be considered at the place in question. That becomes uncanny, and travellers go roundabout to avoid it. At length some sapient illuminati resolve the mystery. They observe that the faces of the deceased (whatever the nature of the injuries) have a common *acrid* expression. They observe that the rocky banks through which the road is cut make, as it were, a ventilator, by way of which the draught of the whole valley passes. Any one rushing through this gut must meet a very spindrift of wind and dust. And latterly he must have met worse—clouds of flies risen from settling—perhaps feeding—on some venom, most swiftly fatal to human life, that had been spilt on the further side of the gully. Now, if a fly or flies, reeking poison, were driven into the eye or eyes of a swiftly going traveller—! (Here are invited hypotheses,¹ agreeable to taste, or reason. Only one of these, it may be suggested, is in question. The reader will of course know which.)

II. OF THE DEAD COOK UNDER THE COAL SHOOT.

One morning is found, lying under the open circular shoot of a coal cellar beneath the pavement, the dead body of the general servant to a family living in a quiet street of a quiet suburb. She had evidently gone in the early morning to fetch coals, had mounted a heap of the stuff in order to the procuring of more light by removing the cap of the shoot, and had, while in this position, been struck and maltreated from above. Her scalp is abraded, her neck dislocated. The pavement in the immediate neighbourhood of the orifice is slightly spattered with blood, while an indifferent track of blood-drops (fallen, it is presumed, from the instrument used) extends thence to the roadway. It would seem that the crown of the victim's head was, when assailed, actually projected, sprouting like a red tulip bud from the pavement. Now it is the very character of the injuries that baffles inquisition; for the damage to the scalp is superficial, and insufficient to account for the spilt blood, as in evidence. Moreover, even a red-haired cook will not allow her neck to be broken without a struggle, and here there was no sign of the occurrence of any.

¹ Sometimes a veterinary surgeon will, we believe, destroy a condemned dog or cat by dropping hydrocyanic acid into the corner of its eye.

So, again we set our illuminati to work; and this is the solution of the mystery as they interpret it:—A circus company is leaving the neighbourhood in the early morning. A young elephant—one of certain animals conducted through the empty streets—becoming either scared or skittish, breaks from the ranks and scuttles along the side-walk. Mary Jane—who has stationed herself immediately beneath the opened coal-shoot—hearing strange sounds, essays to project her inquisitive knowledge box through the aperture, and has only got so far as to bung the latter, when the elephant shuffles up, and, unthinking, puts a foot upon the sprouting bulb, as upon a mere eccentricity of the pavement. Down goes Mary Jane, shutting upon herself, between the elephant and the coal, with a scratched scalp and a dislocated neck; and down also goes the animal's foot, wedging itself in the hole. And here it is, in the beast's frantic struggles to withdraw its limb, that the skin thereof is frayed and the blood scattered. (Note by illuminati: Diameter of blood corpuscle in man, 3,300th of an inch; of an elephant, 2,745th of an inch.)

THE PLOT OF THE PHENOMENAL CALCULATOR AND THE QUANTITY SURVEYOR.

Premiss: It has been related to us how a certain engineer, having the faculty of numerical calculation abnormally developed, would, while ciphering his astounding algorithms, wave his arms, crack his finger joints, rush from chair to chair, and even leap from chair to table of the room in which he worked.

Plot: Miss Tottie Highclere, of the Theatre of Varieties, stands frequently—while attiring herself, in her lodgings, before her bedroom mirror—spell-bound to witness the shadowy presentment of one who, in a room opposite her own, across the street, appears to practise such fantastic, and to her, unaccountable evolutions as those referred to above. Her curiosity and her interest are greatly excited; her spirit of natural romance is stimulated by an occasional more intimate view of the subject of her secret regard, when, in the intervals of his apparently insane capriciousness, he shows himself, a melancholy young gentleman of pre-occupied expression, at his window. Miss Tottie indulges a fancy until it comes to tyrannise over her. The familiar tickle under the ribs of popular applause must dull of its allurements so long as a solution of this mystery is permitted to elude her. She sets herself to the unravelling task with as much affected impatience

and private enjoyment as a woman expresses in the reeling out of a tangled skein of wool. Needless to say that, by means of her persistent and, so to speak, pachydermatous witchery, she is successful in picking up and following the clue. Details of the process it is idle to specify. A dozen of possible methods, serious or frolic, suggest themselves. Miss Tottie learns that her opposite neighbour (not the actual caperer) is a quantity surveyor (which we must conceive as a sort of practical mathematician, who works out his figures of bricks and timber for the builder); that he is himself a grossly ignorant man, having only that order of intelligence that enables its possessor to take full profit of the brains of his employés; and that he is making a rapid fortune by means of the caperer—a youthful phenomenal calculator upon whom he has chanced, and whose natural genius for figures he has been quick to turn to his own advantage, and for a consideration that spells starvation to the other. Miss Tottie further learns that the caperer (on the whole a rather poor abnormality, and one quite unwitting of the material value of his gift) is never allowed to leave the house; and that therein he is bound to subjection by the triple cord of physical fear, moral cowardice, and the threat of prosecution for the recovery of a trifling loan advanced to him at one time by his employer. She learns it all—somehow; and she is indignant, and pitying, and sympathetic; and her coryphée blood boils—while the fire burns; and she is quite an admirable Tottie.

Behold her then—this little Fanfan of tricks and ‘turns’—delightedly conceiving and maturing her plans for a declaration of independence, for the triumph of innocence over a particularly despicable form of oppression. One day the quantity surveyor receives by post a stall ticket (available that night) for Miss Tottie Highclere’s benefit performance at the Theatre of Varieties. The gross creature recalls, with a feculent laugh, how he has been made latterly the subject of certain suggestive oglings on the part of the actress who lives in the house opposite. He has all the arrogant faith of his kind in the power of reputable opulence to make the least desirable personality magnetic—an unjustified creed, of course. He knows—or thinks he knows—that the actual fruit of romance, like early strawberries, is for the high bidder. Shall he pay the price? He is something of a glutton, and he will. He goes to the theatre; makes, even, an occasion of it, and dines apoplectically at a restaurant before he

takes a cab (and the full measure of it at a shilling) to the house. He does not guess that his inducement to this is a 'plant;' *that his phenomenon is there before him.*

Presently, item, on the programme: Miss Tottie Highclere in the guise of show-woman to the *Lightning Calculator*! In a sort of gasping dream he sees his own abused phenomenon enter upon and take—in those very galvanic and fantastic plunges, with which he is so familiar—the stage; hears the shrill question; agonises through the expectant pause; shrinks beneath the resultant thunder of acclamation, and, foreseeing all that is implied in the glorious treachery, dies perhaps of apoplexy on the spot.

And as for Miss Tottie and her prodigy?—well, having set him on his legs, she remembers no doubt her own, and dances away on them to new fields of conquest, leaving the phenomenon in a mire of infatuation more stultifying than that of his ancient servitude.

PLOT OF THE MISUSED ABACUS.

A scientific gentleman, who has undertaken to read, at a *conversazione*, a paper on some astronomical subject that shall enable him to practically demonstrate the merits of a new arithmometer, or calculating machine, has the misfortune to fall indisposed on the very afternoon of his engagement. In despair, he will commission a lay friend to read his paper for him. 'But how about the numerical demonstration?' says the friend. 'Oh!' says the scientific gentleman; 'that is simple. Wherever illustrations are needed, I will write you exact directions on the margin of my MS. as to the management of the machine, the disposition of certain numbers, and the revolutions of the handle necessary to the working out of the desired sums.' 'Very well,' says the confident friend; and off he goes presently to his appointment, with a box like a hurdy-gurdy under his arm. But the scientific gentleman's written directions prove, where not unintelligible, frequently illegible, and—— (The potentialities for comic business are here so patent and so liberal that it may be left to the fancy of any reader to supply a *dénoûment*.)

Here be some of them, past-dated service vestments, but now, we find, with the moth in them. If there be such a thing as a literary old-clothesman, he is welcome to the bundle, for—a song, shall we say?

BERNARD⁷ CAPES.

*A WAR-OFFICE SECRET.**A TALE OF THE SERVICE.*

'WALLINGFORD shoot?' said Sergeant Harding. 'Of course he can. A man on the staff at Hythe has a rifle in his hand all day and every day. Even you could shoot under such—well, perhaps not you, for you never know what you can't do until you try. Do I know the School of Musketry? I do know it—lock, stock, barrel, and cleaning-rod, or I should say, in these Lee-Metford days, clearing-rod. For the cleaning-rod's as dead as Queen Anne or the pig-tails for which the Welsh Fusiliers still wear the "flash," though the powder and pomatum from which the "flash" protected the coatee has been gone for the best part of a century.

'Now you all know why foreign Military Attachés are in England. They are here to see the rights of all improvements in the army—in men, in tools, in the handling of either. They notice a new explosive, or a new drill movement, and if the Horse Guards gave me a commission I reckon they would notice that, and would tell their respective War Offices that they had better look out now. Our Military Attachés are abroad for the same purpose. They're just spies in peace time. Why, I remember, when cordite came out, how one of the Continental War Offices sent a gunner officer over here—they said, to learn English. I know the man at Woolwich who gave him cordite, and how much he got for it. I know the Englishman who found the man at Woolwich who would do the job. I know how much more he got for it. But would I breathe the name of that Continental Power to make international complications? Not me. I know better what's due to my country. All which leads up to this. When I was at Hythe, qualifying for two guns and a crown over my three stripes, there was a great mystery about the Maxim. In fact, we, who were undergoing instruction as instructors, were never shown the mechanism of the block. The instructor of the Hythe staff used always to take that out of the gun and hold it behind him while he explained the other parts. And that was what made me curious to see the block. I was working very hard in the evenings; yet, for my health's sake, I had to take a walk now

and then into Folkestone and along the Leas. And there I met a young foreign person who told me she was a lady's-maid. How did I make her acquaintance? If you don't know a simple little thing like that, you ought to. We learn in the army the art of mixing gracefully in female society. And the young foreign person, who spoke English beautifully, said to me one evening, as we were sitting in a quiet spot away from other people and from gas-lamps:

"I do love to hear about all that concerns you. Tell me all about what you do at the School of Musketry."

"Oh, it's all very simple, Mamselle," said I. Then, just to show her what a clever fellow I was, I began to give her a full account of all the difficult things we had to do. And, of course, among other things, I spoke of the machine guns.

"Those are the horrid things that go crk-crk-crk-crk, are they not?" asked she, as she imitated perfectly the venomous spit of the beasts.

"That's it."

"Tell me about them. I think they are wonderfully interesting. How well educated a soldier has to be nowadays to understand such things!"

"It's quite true that a first-class certificate of education, which a sergeant is now bound to have, is not got for the asking." Then I went on to tell her the mechanism of the Maxim.

"But the funniest thing about it all is that they won't let us see the works of the block, although we are to qualify for musketry instructors."

"And of the most important part of the gun you know nothing?"

"I have a general idea."

"A man who is as clever as you in mechanics and mathematics ought to know all about it. I should be curious to know if I were you."

"I could easily find out all about it if I cared to take the trouble."

"Trouble! What is trouble to a scientific man? If I were you I should think nothing of any little trouble. Now, I will spur you for your own good, and to advance you in the service. I am curious, all for your sake, to know about this gun. I'll bet you what you like you don't explain the mechanism of the block to me within a month. Your explanations make even dry old figures interesting."

"And I can name the stakes?"

"Certainly."

"A kiss then."

"I can't bet you that."

"But I was to name the stakes."

"Oh, I couldn't think of it."

"There's no need for you to think of it, Mamselle. You've only to do it. I have your word, you know. If you are honourable——"

"Sir!"

"Then the bet is off?"

"No. I gave you my word. It is annoying. But I will keep my word."

"And I can give you my word that I shall win. So, perhaps, in case you change your mind, I had better have the kiss now."

"The rest of the evening has nothing to do with the story."

"Now, I had been working hard at the mechanics of guns before I went to the School of Musketry, so that I might do well. And I had a natural taste for such things in the blood, probably because my aunt married a smith, to whom I was to have been bound apprentice, only I would none of him and his smithy. So you only had to show me the cocoanut in gunnery mechanics and I tumbled to what kind of milk was inside. The next Maxim day we were all gathered round the instructor, who was reeling out his Maxim yarn. He had taken out the block, and was holding it in his fingers behind his back. I had my note-book in my hand, and I slipped behind him. In a very few moments I had a sketch of all that appeared on the surface, and a very good idea of what was beneath it."

"That evening I was sitting among a lot of other men who were swotting for the exam. I had a sheet of foolscap and was busy making a sketch of the action in Indian ink."

"Hallo, young man," said the instructor, who had been looking over my shoulder unbeknown to me; "what have you got there?"

"You ought to know as well as, if not better than I, sergeant-instructor."

"I do know. But where did you get it?"

"That's my business."

"Well, you must give it up."

"Oh no, I shan't."

"But you must."

"It's mine, and you can't take it away from me."

"We'll see what Lieutenant Brown says about that."

"If Lieutenant Brown says I must give it up, I will. But not unless."

"Come along, then, to his quarters."

"This is Sergeant Harding, Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, sir," said the sergeant-instructor, when we reached Lieutenant Brown's room. "He has a sketch of the Maxim secret action, and refuses to give it up."

"How's this, Sergeant Harding?" asked Lieutenant Brown.

"The sketch is my own, sir. I refused to give it up to the sergeant-instructor, but said I would give it up at once if you ordered me. But I have made one sketch, and, if you take that away from me, I have the action in my mind, and can always make another sketch."

"That's quite true. Yet such things had better not be knocking about. You will destroy the sketch, Sergeant Harding?"

"Yes," thought I, "when I have shown it and won my bet."

"And how did you get hold of it?"

"Must I tell you, sir?"

"Yes."

"I took it down in my note-book while the sergeant-instructor held the block behind his back."

"The sergeant-instructor looked foolish, and Lieutenant Brown drawled:

"I think, sergeant-instructor, you had better have settled this little matter without appealing to me. Good night, both."

"The sergeant-instructor was too upset to want to see the sketch destroyed. I lost very little time in strolling down to that quiet spot where I might chance to light on Mamselle. Not that, in view of what is to come, I wish in any way to say, or to hint, or to imply that she was French. Far from it. I used the name "Mamselle" as meaning young foreign person, as a sailor uses "Dutchman" to mean a foreign sailor, usually a Norwegian or a Swede. She was there.

"Good evening, Mamselle," said I. "Had you any idea of going on the pier this evening, or do you prefer to stop quietly here?"

"To stop here, I think; that is," she said hurriedly—"I wonder why—" "if you're going to behave yourself properly."

"Well," said I, "as I've won my bet, I think I may as well collect the stakes."

"You've won? You know all about the Maxim?" asked she, so excitedly that her words tumbled one over the other.

"I have told you so."

"Yes; but you are sure?"

"Quite. I have an Indian-ink sketch of it on me."

"Let me see it—let me see it," she repeated. And her eyes gleamed.

"Quite so," said I. "Seeing's believing; but—I should like to collect my stakes."

No longer coy, she flung her arms round my neck and kissed me till I had no breath with which to repay her kisses. But she herself had breath enough to gasp:

"Give me the paper."

I put my hand in the breast-pocket of my serge, which I always used to wear under my great-coat. I began to pull out the drawing. Just then I heard the drawling voice of Lieutenant Brown come from the darkness—for we were in a very quiet and cosy corner:

"I thought as much, Sergeant Harding. You are under arrest. Follow me to quarters."

I turned towards the voice, and then towards Mamselle—or towards where she had been, for she was gone.

I rose and saluted.

"May I ask you, sir——?"

"You're a lucky man that I had a suspicion of the facts. You're fool enough to do a lot of harm, and too big a fool to know you're doing it. You Cornish enough, do you believe one of the prettiest women in Folkestone and one of the cleverest women in the world is in love with you? You were just on the point of giving a drawing of the secret action to the smartest unofficial Military Attaché—and that is spy—of ——"

"Shall I name the country which he named to me? Not I. No strained relations, no wars and rumours of wars, shall come upon England through me. I want no secret *dossier*—whatever that may be. But, as long as I live, it shall be a secret for which War Office Mamselle was collecting information.

'Her profession was bad; but her kisses!—ah, they were good.'

THE BOER AT HOME.

THE vast solitudes of the South African *veld*—the leagues of stony or sandy ground, dotted with thorny scrub—the bare, inhospitable hills, or, again, those others that are clothed with dense, stubborn bush—the broad, winding rivers, whose beds, for months together, are almost dry, yet periodically turn into raging, irresistible torrents—this enormous country, with its sparse population, its illimitable horizon, its sense of remoteness and isolation, has a weird, perhaps a depressing effect on the imagination of the casual visitor; but to many of those who are born and bred amid its surroundings, to many also who settle there in later life, it becomes dear, familiar, and homelike. More than this, the characters of those early settlers who were pioneers of the veld when it was even wilder and more uncivilised than it is now were no doubt strongly influenced by the severe monotony of the landscape, the vast spaces empty of human life and industry.

Thus, a knowledge of the aspect of the country, a picture of it before the mind's eye, will help us to an understanding of what we have so greatly misunderstood—the character of the average Boer of to-day, who is, in all essentials, such as the Boer of fifty or a hundred years ago; who has been fighting against us for the last seven months because he firmly believes that we wish to deprive him of his home and his liberty; who makes no progress, who acquires no knowledge, because, to quote his own unalterable motto, 'what was good enough for our fathers is good enough for us.'

A residence of several years among a large Boer population of the most unenlightened description has given me materials on which I may perhaps construct a fairly correct estimate of the character of the average Boer—not the educated and progressive Dutchman who is beginning to make his influence felt, and will do so more and more, let us hope, with every year; but the ordinary, uneducated farmer, the 'man in the veld,' the herder of goats, who can hardly write his own name and cannot read his own or any other language; the man whose courage, tenacity, and skill in certain methods of warfare have excited our admiration and astonishment, while his treachery and brutality have too often revolted all our best feelings.

Familiar to my eyes is the typical Dutch homestead—I see it

as I write—four-roomed, dilapidated, dreary and unsavoury, erected, perhaps, by the present owner's great-grandfather, and surrounded by a wilderness of his own creation, for the Boer always cuts down every tree, and every bush of any size, growing within a half-mile radius of his homestead. The reasons for this proceeding I have never yet been able to fathom; but there can be little doubt that this wholesale destruction of trees has contributed to the terrible rainlessness of some parts of the country, which seems to increase as years go on.

Familiar, too, are the typical figures that haunt the homestead—the tall, gaunt, loose-limbed, hairy farmer, active on occasion, yet immeasurably lazy; big-boned and strong, yet not with the healthy strength of an athletic Englishman; and his ponderous, muscular *wrouw*, almost, if not quite, as strong as her husband, often equally capable of counting the goats and holding the plough; the sons, like half-grown colts, all length of limb and unkempt hair; the daughters, more slender as yet than their mother, sometimes very pretty, in a rather large style; and the whole family, as a rule, have remarkably little to say for themselves.

The character of these Boers, like the place of their habitation, is primitive—primitive in its virtues as also in its defects. Like the Kafir, whom they despise, they are both courageous and superstitious, both childlike and cunning, both hospitable and treacherous, both active and indolent.

I have not myself acquired any fluency in the Low Dutch which is spoken by the uneducated Boer, and also by the coloured people; but indeed there is no advantage to be gained by so doing, for conversation, in any real sense of the word, they have none. How often have I listened to an intelligent, well-informed English farmer holding forth on home or foreign politics, or even on some subject of local interest, to one of his Dutch neighbours, whose only part in the conversation was to say, about three times every minute, '*Ja, Mr. K—, ja, Mr. K—,*' sometimes repeating, in addition, the last two or three words of his interlocutor's sentence; and the constant repetition of this pregnant observation, in the course of half an hour or so, becomes to the silent listener equally ridiculous and wearisome.

I think it scarcely possible for any one who has not lived among the lower class of Boers to gauge their really vast ignorance. They have no knowledge of any world outside the veld; and the little Dutch village, or 'church-place,' where they assemble four times a year to receive the Sacrament and hold

holiday: their lives are as totally devoid of any intellectual interest as the lives of their Kafir and Hottentot servants—I had almost said of their goats and ostriches. A large proportion of them can neither read nor write, as I often had occasion to observe when they came to the Field Cornet to register a birth or a death, and did not know how to spell their own names. One in particular I recall, who, by a freak of fate, inherited the illustrious name of Erasmus, and who came to register the death of his wife. When called upon to sign his name, he proceeded to form laboriously several small letters—two or three n's, four t's, three r's, and so on, but never a vowel among them all. When the work, which occupied at least ten minutes, was completed, he surveyed it with pride and satisfaction, and remarked, 'There! It is not very well written, certainly, but still it is quite legible!'

The Boers, as a rule, marry very young, between the ages of sixteen and twenty; and as the Dutch Church in its wisdom has ordained that they shall not marry until they have been confirmed, and that they shall not be confirmed until they can sign their names and repeat certain answers in the Dutch catechism, it therefore follows that, when they want to get married, they forthwith learn, not to write, but to form mechanically, and in correct order, the letters composing their name; and they also learn, not to read, but they acquire orally that portion of the Dutch catechism which it behoves them to know, and in later life, for want of practice, even this amount of useful knowledge is frequently forgotten.

This, of course, is the lowest stratum. Above this is a very superior class, who go to school for one year, or even two, and are then pronounced 'vollgelernt,' or, in English phrase, 'finished.' These are the educated Dutchmen who read 'Ons Land' and similar publications, and digest the marvellous fictions therein contained; and of these is the Boer, henceforward famous in history, who said that 'he did not mind Lord Salisbury, and he could even put up with Mr. Chamberlain; but he could not stand that Mr. Franchise, and was determined to have a shot at him directly he got the chance!'

Two marked characteristics of the Boer, which have strongly appealed to the sympathy of many people not otherwise favourable to their cause, are his attachment to the soil and his love of independence, the latter quality being marred by the circumstance that he does not willingly concede independence to any one else.

The spot of ground on which he is born and reared seems to

be almost sacred to the Boer, and, moreover, to his children after him. As an instance of this, I know of several cases where three or four generations of one family have congregated on a single farm, until it is impossible for the land to support them, impossible for them to live there in comfort, or even decency. A Dutch farmer has, let us say, three sons. When they grow up, he gives them each a piece of his farm; they build themselves houses, of a kind; they marry, and bring up their children there. Later on, the children of these brothers intermarry; the farm is then further subdivided, until at last each one has the merest plot of ground, sufficient to feed a few goats and to grow a few vegetables. Yet they would rather continue to exist in this miserable manner than leave the original home and work their way up to a better condition in some other part of the country.

More, however, than even the beloved homestead does the Boer cherish his independence, partly, no doubt, as we value anything for which we have fought a stern fight and endured much hardship. He knows that, in times past, by fierce courage, by patient endurance, by dogged, unyielding determination and tenacity, he has subdued the wilderness, and made himself households in the fastnesses of the savage Kafir and the beast of prey. He dreads nothing more than to lose what has been so hardly gained; and this is perhaps why he so readily listens to the lies which represent us as thirsting to deprive him of his liberty, and why he will not understand that it is only by his own folly that he forfeits it.

As we learn from his past history, as soon as the Boer is threatened with anything like good government, at once he begins to 'trek': away he goes, far into the wilds, dreading the savage beast, or the still more savage man, less than the civilised foreigner, with his rigid laws, his taxation, his compulsory education. The Boer will sit down under the tyranny and corruption of rulers of his own blood; but he will fly from the justice, the security, and the privileges of an alien government.

The life of these primitive pioneers was well described to me by an old colonist, who knew it well. They were a law to themselves, for there was no man to give them laws. For the greater part of the year they would pass their time in hunting big game, living chiefly on the meat, and then, from the numerous skins thus obtained, they would make 'riems,' or leather thongs, and 'bray' them—soften them, and dress them, till they were fit for use. Then, one day, the Boer would take leave of his wife, put

everything in her charge, and travel off down south, to some town where he could exchange his riems for meal and coffee. After an absence more or less prolonged he would return, to find that his wife had kept strict watch and ward over all their goods. The story goes, however, that on one occasion the wife of an absent Boer was visited by some very suspicious-looking natives, whose conduct excited her alarm. She dared not refuse them the hospitality they demanded, but she contrived to mix with their porridge some powdered arsenic, kept for poisoning jackals and other noxious animals. Her husband, returning immediately afterwards, found his wife safe and well, and the bodies of two dead Kafirs outside the house.

If the Boer must now lose his cherished independence, we may almost suppose that he would rather lose it to any other nation in the world than the English. No chastisement could be bitterer to him than to be thoroughly beaten by an English army—in the first place, because he really never has been thoroughly beaten by us; and, in the second place, because since '81 he has heartily despised us, and has openly expressed his contempt. 'You English, that cannot learn,' said a typical Boer, with typical contempt, to an English lady, who was too wise to answer him. It is always hard to own oneself in the wrong; but the conditions under which the Boers will have to do so will be, for them, quite exceptionally hard.

No sketch of the Boer character could be complete without some reference to the religious side of it—the side most difficult of comprehension to an ordinary English mind. The psalm-singing Boer, with a text on his lips while he aims a treacherous blow in the dark, is to us the very embodiment of cant and hypocrisy. Yet, after all, the Boer is nothing if not religious; and when the remark has been made to me, as it has been frequently, that his religion must be all humbug, I have not hesitated to reply that, on the contrary, I believe it to be, for the most part, sincere. He does undoubtedly believe that his cause is a sacred one, and that the Lord is fighting on his side. 'What!' exclaimed a profane Englishman, on hearing this sentiment expressed, 'have you commandeered the Almighty too?' The phrase was not unapt. The Boer has commandeered the Almighty, and is by this time greatly disappointed that the Almighty has not performed what was expected of Him. 'If we do not win in this war,' said a sturdy old Boer, 'I will throw my Bible in the fire, and never read it again.' He only voiced the

feelings of many of his comrades, and I have no doubt that in some cases the threat will be carried out.

When I was staying in Hanover, a thoroughly Dutch town, not long ago, it was somewhat aggravating to the English minority to see the whole Dutch population streaming to church every evening of the week, to return thanks for Boer victories, and to pray for more. It is a colonial town, and these were British subjects; and their stentorian voices, drawling through the long, monotonous hymns, had an irritating effect on their fellow-subjects who were really British. At that time, however, there were only about a hundred and fifty soldiers in the camp at Hanover Road, and the Boer residents had the courage of their opinions.

If we keep in mind the profound ignorance of the Boer, and the fact that religion allied to ignorance is mostly superstition, we shall not find it so hard to believe that, in spite of appearances, they may be sincere. The childish and meaningless character of some of their superstitions is well illustrated by an incident which occurred to an acquaintance of mine some years ago. In the last native war, in 1875, he was captain of a company of volunteers. They had halted for the night near a little Dutch village, one of the company, a young Englishman, being too ill to proceed further. The troop had to move on the next day; but this young fellow, who was dying, begged the captain to remain with him until he died, and to see that he had decent burial. The captain agreed, and sent the troop forward under the officer second in command, while he remained to nurse his comrade, who died two days later. True to his promise, the captain then sought out the Dutch minister, to ask him to read a burial service over the grave. He soon found the house, knocked at the door, and the minister himself came out. Contrary, however, to the usual hospitable Dutch custom, he did not invite the Englishman into his house, or offer him any refreshment, but rather stood in the entrance in such a manner as to prevent him from coming in. He willingly agreed, however, to perform the funeral. The captain went away, pondering over this strange conduct, but, being well acquainted with the customs of all sorts of Boers, the solution presently occurred to him. When he met the minister again, he said to him, 'I know why you would not admit me into your house this morning; it was because I wear a moustache, was it not?' To which the minister assented. The explanation is, that he was of the sect of the Doppers, and the

Doppers allow no hair to be worn on the face except the fringe under the chin, with which the portraits of President Kruger have made us all familiar.

How, then, does the Boer reconcile his religion, if it is really sincere, with his excessive untruthfulness, and his undeniable brutality to the coloured people?

With regard to the former, we must realise that truth is no virtue at all to the Boer, and has no connection in his mind with religion. Deception and cunning are, to him, proofs of superior intelligence; straightforwardness, and confidence in the honour of other people, are merely indications of a great lack of intelligence; and the whole subject has no more to do with religion than stock-broking has to do with painting pictures.

With respect to their treatment of the natives, it is, like their similar treatment of animals, based on the conviction that they are inferior beings, who have no souls (or, at least, it is extremely doubtful), and whose bodily sufferings are of little account. 'If I find any coloured people in heaven,' said an old Dutch *woman*, 'I shall take up my stool and walk out.'

This war is, therefore, to the majority of the Boers, nothing less than a religious war. They go into the conflict with the sword in one hand, and the Bible in the other. They are sustained by the proud sense of being a peculiar and favoured people; even in defeat, they are conscious of being martyrs, the blameless victims of an unrighteous persecution.

As long as a man is firmly convinced that he is right he will fight for his forlorn hope to the bitter end; it is the fear that, after all, he may be wrong, that unnerves his brain, and unsteadies his hand. When the success of our arms conveys to the untutored Boer mind the conviction that God has forsaken him, one of the strongest motives for his resistance will be gone.

Thus a little study of the Boer character, and of the circumstances under which they are now fighting, may help us to answer the question which has been perplexing some of us for the last few weeks, namely, why do they persist with such tenacity in playing a losing game, long after it must be apparent, even to themselves, that it is a losing game? Why, but because they have been brought up to hate and despise us, and they will not believe, even now, that we are stronger than they: a Boer can no more change an idea in which he has been bred up than he can change his dwelling-place and his mode of life. Because,

too, they are by nature tenacious, beyond anything we can conceive, and they are fighting for what is most dear to them—the liberty to sit still, an immovable obstacle in the path of all who wish to go on, and the undisturbed possession of their particular acre of veld and their bare and comfortless homes. Because, further, they are, in spite of their natural shrewdness, mere children in the hands of those who lead them, and can be made to believe the most preposterous lies; nay, more, when these are proved to be lies, they are still able to swallow a fresh batch of them, and to continue fighting for what, to every one else, is an exploded idea.

And we must not forget that, not so very long ago, they received a good deal of encouragement to persist from ourselves. We sustained severe reverses, and these were made the most of by the Boers' commanders; we fell many times, and after many warnings, into their skilfully prepared death-traps, and they were not without excuse if they thought it likely that we should fall into some more. We lost a great many men, and they took a great many prisoners; and while our losses were exaggerated to them, their own were so carefully concealed that it is doubtful, even now, if any individual Boer has a correct idea of what they are. 'One killed, two wounded,' is no longer his maximum, perhaps; but correct figures he has never yet had, except from us. Then, again, there still existed among them, until quite lately, a widespread belief in European or American intervention. In war, as in other crises of existence, the lookers-on see much the most of the game; and whereas we have all known for a long time that the Transvaal delegates have had the cold shoulder at every Court in Europe, to say nothing of America, yet there is no reason to suppose that, if we had been planted down in the middle of the veld, and had not seen a truthful newspaper for weeks, we should have known anything at all about it, especially if it were some other person's interest to keep it from us.

Our own soldiers tell us that they hardly ever see a newspaper, that we know much more about the war than they do, that they know, indeed, scarcely anything of what is going on, except in the spot where they themselves are fighting. How much more is this the case with the mass of the Boers, who are purposely deceived by their leaders, who did not hear of the relief of Ladysmith or the surrender of Cronje until many days after those events had occurred, and did not believe the news for many days more!

It is probable that an individual Boer, fighting in a given spot, may not know that any delegates have gone to Europe at all, still less that their mission has failed; but he does know, because he sees it with his own eyes, that large numbers of Frenchmen, Russians, Germans, and men of other European nationalities, are fighting side by side with him, and have been doing so since the beginning of the war; he does know that French and Russian officers have trained him and led him on, and that German engineers have taught him to construct those wonderful trenches; he does know that European manufacturers are ready to supply him with as many arms and as much ammunition as he wants; and he not unnaturally concludes that the Governments of these nations have been sending him help, and will be willing to send him more.

Thus we have had the spectacle of a people in its childhood contending with a people in its manhood. A people endowed with many fine qualities, and fortified with many glorious traditions in its past history; yet a failure in the present, because it has measured its strength against a nation three centuries in advance of it. These people have yet to learn that the law of progress is stronger than all their tenacity and determination; that the liberty they love can only be preserved by the justice they shun; that this progress of peoples will not go back one hour for all their persistency, but must go forward; and that if they will not go with it, they must go under it, and perish. And for these reasons—because they live in a world which, for their contemporaries, has passed out of mind; because the highest dream of their ambition is a future which shall only repeat the past; because they put their trust in a God who is theirs and no other people's, and whose divine power is limited by their conception of their own requirements; because they know what their strength and cunning have won for them in the past, and they despise a foe who is weak enough to be generous, and foolish enough to be straightforward; and finally, because they are swathed, enveloped, blinded, in the folds of a black, impenetrable ignorance—for all these reasons, we have been the witnesses of a struggle which, for unreasoning, blind tenacity, and suicidal obstinacy, has, perhaps, never been surpassed in the annals of warfare.

ANNA HOWARTH.

THE ISLE OF UNREST.¹

BY HENRY SETON MERRIMAN,

AUTHOR OF 'THE SOWERS,' 'WITH EDGED TOOLS,' 'IN KEDAR'S TENTS,' ETC.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SEARCH.

'Wisdom is oftentimes nearer when we stoop
Than when we soar.'

THERE were many who thought the war was over that rainy morning after the fall of Sedan. For events were made to follow each other quickly by those three sleepless men who moved kings and emperors and armies at their will. Bismarck, Moltke, and Roon must have slept but little—if they closed their eyes at all—between the evening of the first and the morning of the third day of September. For human foresight must have its limits, and the German leaders could hardly have dreamt, in their most optimistic moments, of the triumph that awaited them. Bismarck could hardly have foreseen that he should have to provide for an imperial prisoner. Moltke's marvellous plans of campaign could scarcely have embraced the details necessary to the immediate disposal of ninety thousand prisoners of war, with many guns and horses, and much ammunition.

It was but twenty-four hours after he had left Sedan to seek, and seek in vain, the King of Prussia, that the third Napoleon—the modern man of destiny who had climbed so high and fallen so very low—set out on his journey to the Palace of Wilhelmshöhe, never to set foot on French soil again. For he was to seek a home, and finally a grave, in England, where his bones will lie till that day when France shall think fit to deposit them by those of the founder of the adventurous dynasty.

Among those who stood in the muddy street of Donchery that morning, and watched in silence the departure of the simple carriage, was Mademoiselle Brun, whose stern eyes rested for a moment on the sphinx-like face, met for an instant the dull and extinct gaze, of the man who had twisted all France round his little finger.

When the cavalcade had passed by, she turned away and

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walked towards Sedan. The road was crowded with troops, coming and going almost in silence. Long strings of baggage-carts splashed past. Here and there an ambulance wagon of lighter build was allowed a quicker passage. Messengers rode, or hurried on foot, one way and the other; but few spoke, and a hush seemed to hang over all. There was no cheering this morning—even that was done. The rain splashed pitilessly down on these men who had won a great victory, who now hurried hither and thither, afraid of they knew not what, cowering beneath the silence of heaven.

Mademoiselle was stopped outside the gates of Sedan.

‘You can go no further!’ said an under-officer of a Bavarian regiment in passable French, the first to question the coming or going of this insignificant and self-possessed woman.

‘But I can stay here?’ returned mademoiselle in German. In teaching, she had learnt—which is more than many teachers do.

‘Yes, you can stay here,’ laughed the German.

And she stayed there patiently for hours in the rain and mud. It was afternoon before her reward came. No one heeded her, as, standing on an overturned gun-carriage, beneath her shabby umbrella, she watched the first detachment of nearly ten thousand Frenchmen march out of the fortress to their captivity in Germany.

‘No cavalry?’ she said to a bystander when the last detachment had gone.

‘There is no cavalry left, *ma bonne dame*,’ replied the old man to whom she had spoken.

‘No cavalry left! And Lory de Vasselot was a cuirassier. And Denise loved Lory.’ Mademoiselle Brun knew that, though perhaps Denise herself was scarcely aware of it. In these three thoughts mademoiselle told the whole history of Sedan as it affected her. Solferino had, for her, narrowed down to one man, fat and old at that, riding at the head of his troops on a great horse specially chosen to carry bulk. The victory that was to mar one empire and make another, years after Solferino, was summed up in three thoughts by the woman who had the courage to live frankly in her own small woman’s world, who was ready to fight—as resolutely as any fought at Sedan—for Denise. She turned and went down that historic road, showing now, as ever, a steady and courageous face to the world, though all who spoke to her stabbed her with the words, ‘There is no cavalry left—no cavalry left, *ma bonne dame*.’

She hovered about Donchéry and Sedan, and the ruins of Bazeilles, for some days, and made sure that Lory de Vasselot had not gone, a prisoner, to Germany. The confusion in the French camp was greater than any had anticipated, and no reliable records of any sort were obtainable. Mademoiselle could not even ascertain whether Lory had fought at Sedan; but she shrewdly guessed that the mad attempt to cut a way through the German lines was such as would recommend itself to his heart. She haunted, therefore, the heights of Bazeilles, seeking among the dead one who wore the cuirassier uniform. She found, God knows, enough, but not Lory de Vasselot.

All this while she never wrote to Fréjus, judging, with a deadly common sense, that no news is better than bad news. Day by day she continued her self-imposed task, on the slippery hillsides and in the muddy valleys, until at last she passed for a peasant woman, so bedraggled was her dress, so lined and weather-beaten her face. Her hair grew white in those days, her face greyer. She had not even enough to eat. She lay down and slept whenever she could find a roof to cover her. And always, night and day, she carried with her the burden of that bad news of which she would not seek to relieve herself by the usual human method of telling it to another.

And one day she wandered into a church ten miles on the French side of Sedan, intending perhaps to tell her bad news to One who will always listen. But she found that this was no longer a house of prayer, for the dead and dying were lying in rows on the floor. As she entered, a tall man, coming quickly out, almost knocked her down. His arms were full of cooking utensils. He was in his shirt-sleeves: blood-stained, smoke-grimed, unshaven and unwashed. He turned to apologise, and began explaining that this was no place for a woman; but he stopped short. It was the millionaire Baron de Mélide.

Mademoiselle Brun sat suddenly down on a bench near the door. She did not look at him. Indeed, she purposely looked away, and bit her lip with her little fierce teeth because it would quiver. In a moment she had recovered herself.

'I have come to help you,' she said.

'God knows, we want you,' replied the baron—a phlegmatic man, who, nevertheless, saw the quivering lip, and turned away hastily. For he knew that mademoiselle would never forgive herself, or him, if she broke down now.

'Here,' he said, with a clumsy gaiety, 'will you wash these plates and dishes? You will find the pump in the curé's garden. We have nurses and doctors, but we have no one to wash up. And it is I who do it. This is my hospital. I have borrowed the building from the good God.'

Mademoiselle was naturally a secretive woman. She could even be silent about her neighbours' affairs. Susini had been guided by a quick intuition, characteristic of his race, when he had confided in this Frenchwoman. She had been some hours in the baron's hospital before she even mentioned Lory's name.

'And the Count de Vasselot?' she inquired, in her usual curt form of interrogation, as they were taking a hurried and uncere-
monious meal in the vestry by the light of an altar candle.

The baron shook his head and gulped down his food.

'No news?' inquired Mademoiselle Brun.

'None.'

They continued to eat for some minutes in silence.

'Was he at Sedan?' asked mademoiselle at length.

'Yes,' replied the baron, gravely. And then they continued their meal in silence by the light of the flickering candle.

'Have you any one looking for him?' asked mademoiselle, as she rose from the table and began to clear it.

'I have sent two of my men to do so,' replied the baron, who was by nature no more expansive than his old governess. And for some days there was no mention of de Vasselot between them.

Mademoiselle found plenty of work to do besides the menial labours of which she had relieved the man who deemed himself fit for nothing more complicated than washing dishes and providing funds. She wrote letters for the wounded, and also for the dead. She had a way of looking at those who groaned unnecessarily and out of idle self-pity, which was conducive to silence, and therefore to the comfort of others. She smoothed no pillows and proffered no soft words of sympathy. But it was she who found out that the curé had a piano. She it was who took two hospital attendants to the priest's humble house and brought the instrument away. She had it placed inside the altar rails, and fought the curé afterwards in the vestry as to the heinousness of the proceeding.

'You will not play secular airs?' pleaded the old man.

'All that there is of the most secular,' replied she, inexorably. 'And the recording angels will, no doubt, enter it to my account—and not yours, monsieur le curé.'

So Mademoiselle Brun played to the wounded all through the long afternoons until her fingers grew stiff. And the doctors said that she saved more than one fretting life. She was not a great musician, but she had a soothing, old-fashioned touch. She only played such ancient airs as she could remember. And the more she played the more she remembered. It seemed to come back to her—each day a little more. Which was odd, for the music was, as she had promised the curé, secular enough, and could not, therefore, have been inspired by her sacred surroundings within the altar rails. Though, after all, it may have been that those who recorded this sacrilege against Mademoiselle Brun, not only made a cross-entry on the credit side, but helped her memory to recall that forgotten music.

Thus the days slipped by, and little news filtered through to the quiet Ardennes village. The tide of war had rolled on. The Germans, it was said, were already halfway to Paris. And from Paris itself the tidings were wellnigh incredible. One thing alone was certain; the Bonaparte dynasty was at an end and the mighty schemes of an ambitious woman had crumbled like ashes within her hands. All the plotting of the Regency had fallen to pieces with the fall of the greatest schemer of them all, whom the Paris government fatuously attempted to hoodwink. Napoleon the Third was indeed a clever man, since his own wife never knew how clever he was. So France was now a howling Republic—a Republic being a community wherein every man is not only equal to, but better than his neighbour, and may therefore shout his loudest.

No great battles followed Sedan. France had but one army left, and that was shut up in Metz, under the command of another of the Paris plotters who was a bad general and not even a good conspirator.

Poor France had again fallen into bad hands. It seemed the end of all things. And yet for Mademoiselle Brun, who loved France as well as any, all these troubles were one day dispersed by a single note of a man's voice. She was at the piano, it being afternoon, and was so used to the shuffling of the bearers' feet that she no longer turned to look when one was carried in and another, a dead one perhaps, was carried out.

She heard a laugh, however, that made her music suddenly mute. It was Lory de Vasselot who was laughing, as they carried him into the little church. He was explaining to the baron that he had heard of his hospital, and had caused himself to be carried

thither as soon as he could be moved from the cottage, where he had been cared for by some peasants.

The laugh was silenced, however, at the sight of Mademoiselle Brun.

'You here, mademoiselle?' he said. 'Alone, I hope,' he added, wincing as the bearers set him down.

'Yes, I am alone. Denise is safe at Fréjus with Jane de Mélide.'

'Ah!'

'And your wounds?' said Mademoiselle Brun.

'A sabre-cut on the right shoulder, a bullet through the left leg—voilà tout. I was in Sedan, and we tried to get out. That is all I know, mademoiselle.'

Mademoiselle stood over him with her hands crossed at her waist, looking down at him with compressed lips.

'Not dangerous?' she inquired, glancing at his bandages, which indeed were numerous enough.

'I shall be in the saddle again in three weeks, they tell me. If the war only lasts——' He gave an odd, eager laugh. 'If the war only lasts——'

Then he suddenly turned white and lost consciousness.

CHAPTER XX.

WOUNDED.

'Le temps fortifie ce qu'il n'ébranle pas.'

THAT night mademoiselle wrote to Denise at Fréjus, breaking at last her long silence. That she gave the barest facts, may be safely concluded. Neither did she volunteer a thought or a conclusion. She was as discreet as she was secretive. There are some secrets which are infinitely safer in a woman's custody than in a man's. You may tell a man in confidence the amount of your income, and it will go no further; but in affairs of the heart, and not of the pocket, a woman is safer. Indeed, you may tell a woman your heart's secret, provided she keeps it where she keeps her own. And Mademoiselle Brun had only one thought night and day: the happiness of Denise. That, and a single memory—the secret, perhaps, which was such a standing joke at the school in the Rue du Cherche-Midi—made up the whole life of this obscure woman.

Two days later she gave Lory Susini's message; and de Vasselot sent for the surgeon.

'I am going,' he said. 'Patch me up for a journey.'

The surgeon had dealt so freely with life and death that he only shrugged his shoulders.

'You cannot go alone,' he said—'a man with one arm and one leg.'

Mademoiselle looked from one to the other. She was willing enough that Lory should undertake this journey, for he must needs pass through Provence to get to Corsica. She did not attempt to lead events, but was content to follow and steer them from time to time.

'I am going to the south of France,' she said. 'The baron needs me no longer since the hospital is to be moved to Paris. I can conduct Monsieur de Vasselot—a part of the way at all events.'

And the rest arranged itself. Five days later Lory de Vasselot was lifted from the railway carriage to the Baroness de Mélide's victoria at Fréjus station.

'Madame's son is, no doubt, from Sedan?' said the courteous station-master, who personally attended to the wounded man.

'He is from Sedan—but he is not my son. I never had one,' replied mademoiselle with composure.

She was tired, for she had hardly slept since Lory came under her care. She sat open-eyed, with that knowledge which is given to so few—the knowledge of the gradual completion of a set purpose.

They had travelled all night, and it was not yet midday when mademoiselle first saw, and pointed out to Lory, the white turret of the château among the pines.

The baroness was on the steps to greet them. Like many persons of a gay exterior, she had a kind heart and a quick sympathy. She often did, and said, the right thing, when cleverer people found themselves at fault. She laughed when she saw Lory lying full length across her smart carriage—laughed, despite his white cheeks and the grey weariness of mademoiselle's face. She seemed part of the sunshine and the brisk resinous air.

'Ah, my cousin,' she cried, 'it does the eyes good to see you! I should like to carry you up these steps.'

'In three weeks,' answered de Vasselot, 'I will carry you down.'

'His room is on the ground floor,' said the baroness to mademoiselle, in an aside. 'You are tired, my dear—I see it. Your room is the same as before; you must lie down this after-

noon. I will take care of Lory, and Denise will—but, where is Denise? I thought she was behind me.'

She paused to guide the men who were carrying de Vasselot through the broad doorway.

'Denise!' she cried without looking round, 'Denise! where are you?'

Then turning, she saw Denise coming slowly down the stairs. Her face was whiter than Mademoiselle Brun's. Her eyes, clear and clever, were fixed on Lory's face as if seeking something there. There was an odd silence for a moment—such as, the superstitious say, is caused by the passage of an angel among human beings—even the men carrying Lorry seemed to tread softly. It was he who broke the spell.

'Ah, mademoiselle!' he said gaily, 'the fortune of war, you see!'

'But it might have been so much worse,' said the baroness in a whisper to Mademoiselle Brun. 'Bon Dieu, it might have been so much worse!'

And at luncheon they were gay enough. For a national calamity is, after all, secondary to a family calamity. Only de Vasselot and Mademoiselle Brun had been close to war, and it was no new thing to them. Theirs was, moreover, that sudden gaiety which comes from reaction. The contrast of their present surroundings to that little hospital in a church within cannon-sound of Sedan—the quiet of this country house, the baroness, Denise herself young and grave—were sufficient to chase away the horror of the past weeks.

It was the baroness who kept the conversation alert, asking a hundred questions, and, as often as not, disbelieving the answers.

'And you assure me,' she said for the hundredth time, 'that my poor husband is well. That he does not miss me, I cannot of course believe with the best will in the world, though Mademoiselle Brun assert it with her gravest air. Now, tell me, how does he spend his day?'

'Mostly in washing up dishes,' replied mademoiselle, looking severely at the baron's butler, whose hand happened to shake at that moment as he offered a plate. 'But he is not good at it. He was ignorant of the properties of soda until I informed him.'

'But there is no glory in that,' protested the baroness. 'It was only because he assured me that he would not run into danger, and would inevitably be made a grand commander of the Legion of Honour, that he was allowed to go. I do not see the glory in washing up dishes, my friends, I tell you frankly.'

‘No; but it is there,’ said mademoiselle.

After luncheon Lory, using his crutches, made his way laboriously to the verandah that ran the length of the southern face of the house. It was all hung with creepers, and shaded from the sun by a dense curtain of foliage. Here heliotrope grew like a vine on a trellis against the wall, and semi-tropical flowers bloomed in a bewildering confusion. A little fountain trickled sleepily near at hand, in the mossy basin of which a talkative family of frogs had their habitation.

Half asleep in a long chair, de Vasselot was already coming under the influence of this most healing air in the world, when the rustle of a skirt made him turn.

‘It is only I, my poor Lory,’ said the baroness, looking down at him with an odd smile. ‘You turned so quickly. Is there anything you want—anything in my power to give you, I mean?’

‘I am afraid you have parted with that already.’

‘To that—scullery-man, you mean. Yes, perhaps you are too late. It is so wise to ask too late, *mon cousin*.’

She laughed gaily, and turned away towards the house. Then she stopped suddenly and came back to him.

‘Seriously,’ she said, looking down at him with a grave face—‘seriously. My prayers should always be for any woman who became your wife—you, and your soldiering. Ciel! it would kill any woman who really cared——’

She broke off and contemplated him as he lay at full length.

‘And she might care—a little—that poor woman.’

‘She would have to care for France as well,’ said de Vasselot, momentarily grave at the thought of his country.

‘I know,’ said the baroness, with a wise shake of the head. ‘*Mon ami*, I know all about that.’

‘I have some new newspapers from Paris,’ she added, going towards the house. ‘I will send them to you.’

And it was Denise who brought the newspapers. She handed them to him in silence. Their eyes met for an instant, and both alike had that questioning look which had shone in Denise’s eyes as she came downstairs. They seemed to know each other now better than they had done when they last parted at the Casa Perucca.

There was a chair near to his, and Denise sat down there as if it had been placed on purpose—as perhaps it had—by Fate. They were silent for a few moments, gathering perhaps the threads that connected one with the other. For absence does not

always break such threads, and sometimes strengthens them. Then Lory spoke without looking at her.

‘You received the letter?’ he said.

‘Which letter?’ she asked hurriedly; and then closed her lips and slowly changed colour.

There was only one letter, of course. There could be no other. For it had never been suggested that Lory should write to her.

‘Yes; I received it,’ she answered. ‘Thank you.’

‘Will you answer one question?’ asked Lory.

‘If it is a fair one,’ she answered with a laugh.

‘And who is to decide whether it is a fair one or not?’

‘Oh! I will do that,’ replied Denise with decision.

She knew the weakness of her position, and was prepared to defend it. Her eyes were shining, and the colour had not faded from her cheeks yet. Lory held his lip between his teeth as he looked at her. She waited for the question, without meeting his eyes, with a baffling little smile tilting the corners of her lips.

‘Well,’ she said, after a pause, ‘I suppose you have decided not to ask it?’

‘I have decided to draw conclusions instead, mademoiselle.’

‘Ah!’

‘What does “Ah!” mean?’

‘It means that you will draw them wrong,’ she answered; and yet the tone of her voice seemed to suggest that she would rather like to hear the conclusions.

‘One may conclude then, simply, that you changed your mind after you wrote, and claimed a woman’s privilege.’

‘Yes——’

‘That you were good enough to trust me to send the letter back unopened; and yet you would not trust me with the contents. One may conclude that it is, therefore, also a woman’s privilege to be of two minds at the same time.’

‘If she likes,’ answered Denise. To which wise men know that there is no answer.

De Vasselot made a tragic gesture with his one available hand, and cast his eyes upwards in a mute appeal to the gods. He sighed heavily, and the expression of his face seemed to indicate a hopeless despair.

‘What is the matter?’ she asked, with a solicitude which was perhaps slightly exaggerated.

‘What is one to understand? I ask you that,’ said Lory, turning towards her almost fiercely.

‘What do you want to understand, monsieur?’ asked Denise, quietly.

‘Mon Dieu—you!’

‘Me!’

‘Yes. I cannot understand you at all. You ask my advice, and then you act contrary to it. You write me a letter, and you forbid me to open it. Ah! I was a fool to send that letter back. I have often thought so since——’

Denise was looking gravely at him with an expression in her eyes which made him stop, and laugh, and contradict himself suddenly.

‘You are quite right, mademoiselle, I was not a fool to send it back. It was the only thing I could do; and yet I almost thought, just now, that you were not glad that I had done so.’

‘Then you thought quite wrong,’ said Denise, sharply, with a gleam of anger in her eyes. ‘You think that it is only I who am difficult to understand. You are no easier. They say in Balagna that, if you liked, you could be a sort of king in Northern Corsica, and I am quite sure you have the manners of one.’

‘Thank you, mademoiselle,’ he said with a laugh.

‘Oh—I do not mean the agreeable side of the character. I meant that you are rather given to ordering people about. You send an incompetent and stupid little priest to take us by the hand, and lead us out of the Casa Perucca like two school-children, without so much as a word of explanation.’

‘But I had not your permission to write to you.’

Denise laughed gaily.

‘So far as that goes you had not my permission to order me out of my own house; to send a steamer to St. Florent to fetch me; to treat me as if I were a regiment, in a word—and yet you did it, monsieur.’

Lory sat up in his desire to defend himself, winced, and lay down again.

‘I fancy it is your Corsican blood,’ said Denise, reflectively. She rose and rearranged a very sporting dustcloth which the baroness had laid across the wounded man’s legs, and which his movement had cast to one side. ‘However, it remains for me to thank you,’ she said, and did not sit down again.

‘It may have been badly done, mademoiselle,’ he said earnestly, ‘but I still think that it was the wisest thing to do.’

‘And still you give me no reasons,’ she said without turning to look at him. She was standing at the edge of the verandah,

looking thoughtfully out at the matchless view. For the house stood above the pines which lay like a dusky green carpet between it and the Mediterranean. 'And I am not going to ask you for them,' she added with an odd little smile, not devoid of that deep wisdom with which it is to be presumed women are born; for they have it when it is most useful to them, and at an age when their masculine contemporaries are singularly ignorant of human nature.

'I am going,' she said after a pause. 'Jane told me that I must not tire you.'

'Then stay,' he said. 'It is only when you are not there that I find it tiring.'

She did not answer, and did not move until a servant came noiselessly from the house and approached Lory.

'It is a man,' he said, 'who will not be denied, and says he must speak to Monsieur le Comte. He is from Corsica.'

Denise turned, and her face was quite changed. She had until that moment forgotten Corsica.

CHAPTER XXI.

FOR FRANCE.

'Lov'd I not honour more.'

THE servant retired to bring the new arrival to the verandah. Denise followed him, and, after a few paces, returned to Lory.

'If it is one of my people,' she said, 'I should like to see him before he goes.'

The man who followed the servant to the verandah a minute later had a dark, clean-shaven face, all drawn into fine lines and innumerable minute wrinkles. Such lines mean starvation; but in this case they told a tale of the past, for the dark eyes had no hungry look. They looked hunted—that was all. The glitter of starvation had left them. He glanced uneasily around, took off his hat, and bowed curtly to Lory. The hat and the clothes were new. Then he turned and looked at the servant, who lingered, with a haughty stare which must have been particularly offensive to that respectable Parisian menial. For the Corsicans are bad servants, and despise good servitude in others. When the footman had gone, the new-comer turned to Lory, and said, in a low voice—

'I saw you at Toulon. I have not seen many faces in my life—for I have spent most of it in the macquis—so I remember those I have once met. I knew the Count de Vasselot when he was a young man, and he was what you are now. You are a de Vasselot.'

'Yes,' answered Lory.

'I thought so. That is why I followed you from Toulon—spending my last sou to do so.'

He stopped. His two hands were in the pockets of his dark corduroy trousers, and he jerked them out with a sudden movement, bringing the empty pockets to view.

'Voilà!' he said, 'and I want to go to the war. So I came to you.'

'Good,' said Lory, looking him up and down. 'You look tough, mon ami.'

'I am,' answered the Corsican. 'Ten years of macquis, winter and summer—for one thing or another—do not make a man soft. I was told—the Abbé Susini told me—that France wants every man she can get, so I thought I would try a little fighting.'

'Good,' said Lory again. 'You will find it very good fun.'

The man gave a twisted grin. He had forgotten how to laugh. He drew forward the chair that Denise had just quitted, and sat down close to Lory in quite a friendly way, for there is a bond that draws fighting men and roaming men together despite accidental differences of station.

'One sees,' he said, 'that you are a de Vasselot. And I belong to the de Vasselots—I. Whenever I have got into trouble it has been on that side.'

He looked round to make sure that none could overhear.

'It was I who shot that Italian dog, Pietro Andrei,' he mentioned in confidence, 'on the road below Olmeta—but that was a personal matter.'

'Ah!' said Lory, who had heard the story of Andrei's death on the market-place at Olmeta, and the stern determination of his widow to avenge it.

'Yes—I was starving, and Andrei had money on him. In the old days it was easy enough to get food in the macquis. One could come down into the villages at night. But now it is different. It is a hard life there now, and one may easily die of starvation. There are many who, like Pietro Andrei, are friendly with the gendarmes.'

He finished with a gesture of supreme disgust, as if friendship with a gendarme were the basest of crimes.

'When did you see the Abbé Susini?' asked Lory, 'and where—if you can tell me that?'

'I saw him in the macquis. He often goes up into the mountains alone, dressed like one of us. He is a queer man, that abbé. He says that he sometimes thinks it well to care for the wanderers from his flock—a jest, you see.'

And the man gave his crooked grin again.

'It was above Asco, in the high mountains near Cinto,' he continued, 'and about a week ago. It was he who gave me money, and told me to come and fight for France. He was arranging for others to do the same.'

'The abbé is a practical man,' said Lory.

'Yes—and he told me news of Olmeta,' said the man, glancing sideways at his companion.

'What news?'

'You have no doubt heard it—of Vasselot.'

'I have heard nothing, my friend, but cannon. I am from Sedan to-day.'

The man seemed to hesitate. He turned uneasily in his chair, glanced this way and that among the trees—a habit acquired in the macquis, no doubt. He took off his hat and passed his hand pensively over his hair. Then he turned to Lory.

'There is no longer a Château de Vasselot—it is gone—burnt to the ground, mon brave monsieur.'

'Who burnt it?' asked de Vasselot.

'Who knows?' replied the man. 'The Peruccas, no doubt. They have a woman to lead them now!'

The man finished with a short laugh, which was unpleasant to the ear.

Lory thought of the woman who was leading the Peruccas now, who had quitted the chair in which her accuser now sat, a few minutes earlier, and smiled.

'Have you a cigarette?' asked the Corsican, bluntly.

'Yes—but I cannot offer it to you. It is in my right-hand pocket, and my right arm is disabled.'

'An arm and a leg, eh?' said the man, seeking, in the pocket indicated by Lory, for the neat silver cigarette-case, which he handled with a sort of grand air—this gentleman of the mountain side. 'You will smoke also?'

And with his own brown fingers he was kind enough to place

a cigarette between de Vasselot's lips. The tobacco-smoke seemed to make him feel still more at home with the head of his clan. For he sat down again and began the conversation in quite a familiar way.

'Who is this Colonel Gilbert of Bastia, who mixes himself up in affairs?' he inquired.

'What affairs, my friend?'

'Well, the affairs of others, it would appear. We hear strange stories in the macquis—and things that one would never expect to reach the mountains. They say that Colonel Gilbert busies himself in stirring up the Peruccas and the de Vasselots against each other—an affair that has slept these thirty years.'

'Ah!'

'Yes, and you should know it, you who are the chief of the de Vasselots, and have this woman to deal with; the women are always the worst. The château, they say, was burnt down, and the women disappeared from the Casa Perucca in the same week. The Casa Perucca is empty now, and the Château de Vasselot is gone—at Olmeta they are bored enough, I can tell you.'

'They have nothing to quarrel about,' suggested Lory.

'Nothing,' replied the Corsican, quite gravely.

'And the château was empty when they burnt it?' inquired Lory.

'Yes; it has been empty since I was a boy. I remember it when I went to St. Florent to school, and it was then that I used to see your father, the count. He was powerful in those days—before the Peruccas began to get strong. But they overrun that country now, which is no doubt the reason why you have never been there.'

'Pardon me—I was there when the war broke out two months ago.'

'Ah! We never heard that in the macquis, though the Abbé Susini must have known it. He knows so much that he does not tell—that abbé.'

'Which makes him the strong man he is, mon ami.'

'You are right—you are right,' said the Corsican, rising energetically. 'But I am wasting your time with my talk, and tiring you as well, no doubt.'

'Wait a minute,' replied Lory, touching the bell that stood on a table by his side. 'I will give you a letter to a friend of mine, commanding a regiment in Paris.'

The servant brought the necessary materials, and Lory prepared awkwardly to write. His arm was still weak, but he could use his hand without pain. While he was writing, the man sat watching him, and at last muttered an exclamation of wonderment.

'It is a marvel how you resemble the count,' he said, 'as I remember him thirty years ago, when I was a boy. And do you know, monsieur, I saw an old man the other day for a moment in passing on the road, above Asco, who brought my heart into my throat. If he had not been dead this score of years it might have been your father—not as I remember him, but as the years would have made him. I was hidden in the trees at the side of the road, and he passed by on foot. He had the air of going into the macquis. But I do not know who he was.'

'When was that?' asked de Vasselot, pausing with his pen on the paper.

'That must have been a month ago.'

'And you never saw or heard of him again?'

'No,' answered the man.

Lory continued to write, his arm moving laboriously on the paper.

'I must have a name—of some sort,' he said, 'to give my friend, the commandant.'

'Ah! I cannot give you my own. Jean Florent—since I came from St. Florent—that will do.'

De Vasselot wrote the name, folded and addressed the letter.

'There,' he said, 'and I wish you good luck. Good luck in war-time may mean gold lace on your sleeve in a few months. I shall join you as soon as I can throw my leg across a horse. Will two hundred francs serve you to reach Paris?'

'Give me one hundred. I am no beggar.'

He took the letter and the banknote, shook hands, and went away as abruptly as he came. The man was a murderer, with probably more than one life to account for; and yet he carried his crimes with a certain dignity, and had, at all events, that grand manner which comes from the habit of facing life fearlessly with the odds against.

Lory sat up and watched him. He rang the bell.

'See that man off the premises,' he said to the servant, 'and then beg Mademoiselle Lange to be good enough to return here.'

Denise kept him waiting a long time, and then came with reluctant steps. The mention of Corsica seemed to have changed her humour. She sat down, nevertheless, in the chair, placed there by Fate.

'You sent for me,' she said, rather curtly.

'Because I could not come myself,' he answered. 'I did not want you to see that man. Or rather, I did not want him to see you. He is not one of your people—quite the contrary.'

And de Vasselot laughed with significance.

'One of yours?' she suggested.

'So it appears, though I was not aware of the honour. He described you as "that woman."'

Denise laughed lightly, and threw back her head.

'He may describe me as he likes. Did he bring you news?'

And Denise turned away as she spoke, with that air of indifference which so often covers a keen desire for information, if it is a woman who seeks it.

'Yes,' answered Lory, turning, as she turned, to look at her. He looked at her whenever opportunity offered. The cheek half turned from him was a little sunburnt, the colour of a peach that has ripened in the open under a Southern sun, for Denise loved the air. Perhaps he had only spoken the truth when he said that her absence made him tired. There are many in the world who have to fight against that weariness all their lives. At last, as if with an effort, Denise turned, and met his glance for a moment.

'Bad news,' she said; 'I can see that.'

'Yes. It is bad enough.'

'Of your estates?' inquired Denise.

'No. I never cared for the estate; I do not care for it now.'

'Then it is of . . . some one?'

Lory did not answer at once.

'I shall have to go back to Corsica,' he said at length, 'as soon as I can move—in a few days.'

Denise glanced at him with angry eyes.

'I was told that story,' she said, 'but did not believe it.'

De Vasselot turned and looked at her, but could not see her averted face. His eyes were suddenly fierce. He was a fighter—of a fighting stock—and he instantly perceived that he was called upon at this moment to fight for the happiness of his whole life. He put out his hand and deliberately took hold of the skirt of her

dress. She should not run away at all events. He twisted the soft material round his half-disabled fingers.

'What story?' he asked quietly.

Denise's eyes flashed, and then suddenly grew gentle. She did not quite know whether she was furious or afraid.

'That there was some one in the Château de Vasselot to whom—whom you loved.'

'It is you that I love, mademoiselle,' he answered sharply, with a ring in his voice, which came as a surprise to both of them, and which she never forgot all her life. 'No. Do not go. You are pulling on my injured arm, and I shall not let go.'

Denise sat still, silent and at bay.

'Then who was in the château?' she asked at last.

'I cannot tell you.'

'If it is as you say—about me—and—— I ask you not to go to Corsica.'

'I must go.'

'Why?' asked Denise, with a dangerous quiet in her voice.

'I cannot tell you.'

'Then you expect a great deal.'

De Vasselot slowly untwined his fingers and drew in his arm.

'True,' he said reflectively. 'I must ask nothing or too much. I asked more than you can give, mademoiselle.'

A faint smile flickered across Denise's eyes. Who was he, to say how much a woman can give? She was free to go now, but did not move.

'With Corsica and——' she paused and glanced at his helpless attitude in the long chair,——'and the war, your life is surely sufficiently occupied as it is,' she said coldly.

'But these evil times will pass. The war will cease, and then one may think of being happy. So long as there is war, I must of course fight—fight—fight, while there is a France to fight for.'

Denise laughed.

'That is your scheme of life?' she asked bitterly.

'Yes, mademoiselle.'

She rose and turned angrily away.

'Then it is France you care for—if it is no one in Corsica. France—nothing and nobody—but France.'

And she left him.

(To be continued.)

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